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**USAID's Climate Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods (CREL)
Project - Component 4 - Strategy for Nature Tourism in
Bangladesh**

Submitted to

**Climate-Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods (CREL)
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Winrock International, Dhaka, Bangladesh

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Key Definitions:

Community Tourism: Community tourism is respectful interaction from community tourism experiences that enriches both hosts and visitors, supports and promotes responsible tourism and sustainable livelihoods, provides linkages through the local tourism value chain, and creates social, cultural economic and environmental benefits for local communities.

Sustainable Tourism: The CTO definition of Sustainable Tourism is “Sustainable Tourism Development means the optimal use of social, natural, cultural and financial resources for national development on an equitable and self-sustaining basis to provide a unique visitor experience and an improved quality of life through the partnerships among government, the private sector and communities.”

Community Tourism Enterprise (CTE): The following criteria define CTEs: 1) they are small, medium or micro-enterprises which pursue sustainable tourism and return economic, cultural, social and environmental benefits to the communities in which they operate. 2) The community in which they operate must be able to influence the decision-making process of the enterprise. 3) Ideally, they are owned and operated by the community or one or more community members, either in whole or through joint ventures. 4) They promote the local tourism value chain through linkages, where appropriate, to agriculture, arts and crafts, food service and related small businesses in the community. Privately-owned businesses that meet the first two criteria may also qualify as CTEs.

Export Market-Ready: Tourism products are judged to be market ready in their ability to meet industry standards at national and international levels, thus satisfying minimal industry accepted quality. There are three levels of ‘readiness’ the international marketplace demands from tourism businesses:

Visitor Ready: Business has all its licenses, permits and insurance in place in order to operate legally.

Market Ready: Business markets to potential visitors in the planning stages, communicates with potential visitors year-round, and is ready to accept advanced reservations.

Export Ready: Business markets to and through travel trade distribution sales channels, understands commission or net rate pricing, and agrees to trade bookings and a cancellation policy.

List of Acronyms

AC	Audubon Certification
BJCMNP	Blue and John Crow Mountain National Park
BTB	Bangladesh Tourism Board
BPC	Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation
CMC	Co-management Committee
CMO	Co-Management Organization
CREL	Climate-Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods Project
CBTE	Community Based Tourism Enterprise
CTO	Caribbean Tourism Organization
EU	European Union
FD	Forest Department
GG	Green Globe
HNP	Himchari National Park
ISC	Industry Skills Council
INP	Inani National Park
MACH	Managing Aquatic Systems through Community Husbandry project
IPAC	Integrated Protected Area Co-management Project
ILO	International Labour Organization
LNP	Lawachara National Park
(MTCA)	Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation
NP	National Park
NTS	Nature Tourism Strategy
PA	Protected Area
PPP	Public/Private Sector Partnerships
SNP	Satchari National Park
TIP	Tourism Investment Portfolios
TO	Tour Operators
TTC	Tourism Training Component
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
WS	Wildlife Sanctuary/Wetland Sanctuary
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council
Beel	Permanent oxbow lake within larger more seasonal wetland
Haor	An extensive seasonally flooded saucer-shaped depression

Executive Summary

Nature Tourism development presents Bangladesh with a major opportunity to advance its goals of an inclusive tourism sector that contributes to the nation's economic and social development. International tourism trends are showing a shift away from traditional tourism trends such as beaches, shopping, and entertainment toward interactive, experiential tourism. Bangladesh has a mosaic of destinations with communities that can offer exciting and distinctive natural, heritage and cultural experiences well matched to this experiential market trend.

To take advantage of this opportunity, Winrock International through their Climate-Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods (CREL) project commissioned the development of a Nature Tourism Strategy (NTS) and contracted the services of a Tourism Specialist from Tetra Tech to work with the CREL Component 4 Team to develop the Strategy to be incorporated in the their annual work plan activities for year 2-4. This will facilitate the development of a Sustainable Nature Tourism Programme focusing on designated project areas in Bangladesh that will feed into the long-term tourism Nature/Community Tourism development plan for Bangladesh

The Climate-Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods (CREL) project is designed to scale up and adapt successful co-management models to conserve ecosystems and protected areas (PAs) in Bangladesh, improve governance of natural resources and biodiversity, and increase resilience to climate change through improved planning and livelihoods diversification. The Project is being implemented by Winrock International.

CREL's focus on livelihoods (Component 4) is designed to improve and diversify livelihoods that are environmentally sustainable and resilient to climate change and in so doing, increase the income of poor and disadvantaged resource dependent communities surrounding wetland, coastal, and forest resources in ways that motivate them to conserve the resource and withstand future climate change impacts. As such, Component 4 has embraced Nature Tourism as a tool to strengthen and diversify local livelihoods and support the co-management of natural resources.

The strategy will be implemented between year 2 and year 4 of the CREL project by the Component 4 team working in collaboration with the Tourism Specialist, officials from the Forest Department (FD), The Department of the Environment (DOE), the Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB) and the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation (MTCA).

Tourism development is however not a short term "quick-fix" remedy for economic development and the implementation process will be carried out in three basic phases : Building Capacity to manage and monitor the planned initiatives; Redefining and improving the tourism product (the National Parks in the first instance) and finally marketing, promoting and monitoring of those resources. The third phase has to be done in collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh's Tourism Agencies as they have the overall responsibility of marketing and promoting the country's tourism product. Phase 1 will be programmed in the first three (3) quarters of implementing the NTS, Phase 2 the fourth to the sixth (4-6) quarter and Phase 3 the final two quarters of the CREL project.

The Nature Tourism Strategy will ensure that in the efforts being implemented to improve the governance of natural resources and livelihood diversifications, attention is paid to the social and economic wellbeing of community folk through revenue sharing from the planned increased collections from entry fees to National Parks, identify opportunities for new community tourism development and to help in the overall promotion of Nature Tourism in Bangladesh.

The Strategy identifies opportunities for community tourism development with the National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries as the core focal points and it provides a framework which guides the overall development and promotion of Nature Tourism in Bangladesh. The strategy guarantees that (a) a sustainable tourism product will be developed and (b) strict environmental management guidelines will be incorporated into their management and operations. These two factors will work towards improving the knowledge and awareness of the impacts of climate change and also the livelihood of the residents in the communities through increased economic opportunities generated by tourism development.

In preparing the strategy the team conducted three field trips covering the Satchari National Park, the Lawachara National Park, in the Sylhet Region the Khadimnagar National Park and Rema Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary, the Khulna Region covering the Sundarban (Munshiganj and Chandpai) Wetland Sanctuary and finally the Cox's Bazaar Region covering the Teknuf Wildlife Sanctuary, Sonadia Island, Inani National Park and the Himchari National Park. In addition meetings were held with a series of Private Sector and Public Sector officials, Tour Operators and other tourism experts to obtain their feedback on the viability of Nature Tourism and possible recommendations.

The site visits gave the team the opportunity to observe management and operating procedures at the Parks, assess the physical conditions of the areas, view the flow of visitor traffic into the parks, and touring the surrounding communities to assess the tourism potential in those areas.

The timeframe in conducting the field work and meetings with the various stakeholders was done over a period of twenty (20) days and on completion of the mission an assessment of the sites to determine their market readiness was completed. This assessment was based on the criteria developed as part of the National Community Tourism Policy that was developed for Jamaica in 2010. The assessment is able to identify the readiness of Community Based Tourism Enterprises (CBTE) for the tourism market. There are three levels of readiness: Tier 3 - (Start-Up) Visitor Ready; Tier 2 - Market Ready and Tier 1 - Export Market Ready. All the project sites visited ranged in the Tier 3 – Tier 2 categories. (Export Market Ready is the desired stage of readiness).

Based on the outcomes of the site visits the following areas, in order of priority, will be integrated in the Nature tourism Strategy framework:

- Cox's Bazaar Region - Teknuf Wildlife Sanctuary, Sonadia Island, Inani National Park and the Himchari National Park
- Khulna Region - Sundarban (Munshiganj and Chandpai) Wetland Sanctuary
- Sylhet Region -Khadimnagar National Park and Rema Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary
- Lawachara National Park
- Satchari National Park

The Cox's Bazaar Region had the greatest potential for tourism development as the area boasted two National Parks and a Wetland Sanctuary, Sonadia Island a number of ethnic communities and was also linked to a growing agro industry. The location is probably one of the most beautiful areas of Bangladesh surrounded by mountains, beautiful land and seascapes and vistas, all within two hours of the country's major tourist destination. Coupled with the fact that the area already had a Tourism Master Plan developed, made it easier to identify and implement tourism projects that would be supported from a vibrant tourism destination.

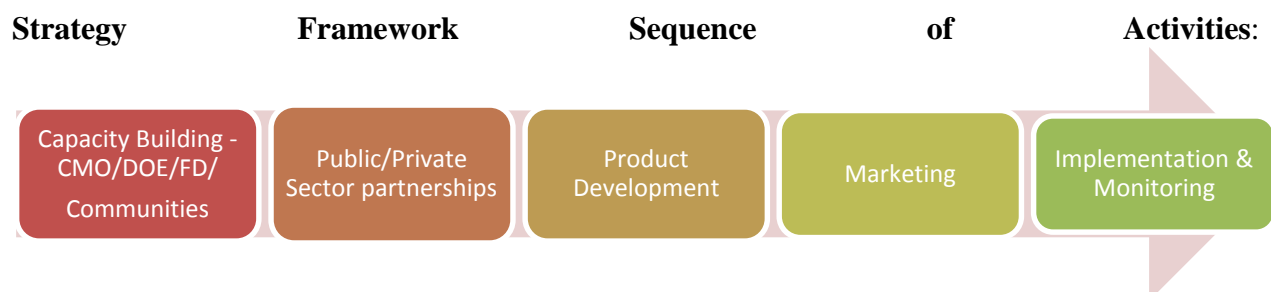
The Khulna Region is identified as the area most poised for further development in accommodations, and River Tours which could be complimented by the overall upgrading of the waterfront of the village of Munshiganj. The focus of development for that area would primarily be Eco Lodges, Boat Tours and the upgrading of the Munshiganj commercial area leading to the docks. The development strategy will include identifying funding (through PPP) to complete a 'facelift' for the bazaar area of Munshiganj providing Tea/Guest Stops, Craft outlets, Food and Beverage (traditional) services and providing basic landscaping.

With regard to the Sylhet Region, both the Khadimnagar National Park and Rema Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary have very little development in place and therefore would require detailed landscaping design plans and an implementation strategy to be done on a phased basis.

With regard to the Lawachara National Park and the Satchari National Park, the strategy would be focusing on improving their operational capabilities and overall refurbishing of the park facilities to bring them both to a Tier 1 – Export Market Ready stage of readiness.

The main focal areas of the Nature Tourism Strategy framework would be divided into five (5) strategic components. They are in order of priority:

- Capacity Building
- Establishing Public/Private Sector Partnerships
- Product Development
- Marketing
- Implementation and Monitoring



As part of the implementation arm of the NTS, a Tourism Task Force and a Private/Public Sector Partnership Strategic group will be established and they will serve in an advisory capacity to the CREL Component 4 team. By establishing these two bodies, it guarantees easier buy-in from all

the stakeholders, providing transparency of the project activities, and sets an expectation that both groups will be able to facilitate the implementation process for projects and programmes under the CREL project.

Capacity Building is the first and most important step in the NTS as it speaks to improving the capabilities of those persons responsible for the management of the nation's natural resources and for them to fully understand the co-relation between those resources and the tourism sector. It also supports the ability for all the stakeholders to be able to work together as one team for a common goal. By establishing a strong and informed leadership core, the other components can then be planned and implemented.

The development of Nature Tourism or any aspect of tourism is a painstaking procedure that requires detailed research, planning, and careful implementation to ensure sustainability. There are no quick fixes to the strategy. And the desired results of the initiatives will not likely be realized until after the first twelve to fifteen months of implementing the strategy.

The CREL Component 4 team will invite input from the Tourism Task Force when necessary as they serve in an advisory capacity to the project. The implementation of the Nature Tourism Strategy will be managed by the CREL Component 4 Manager and the day-to-day operations under the direct supervision of the CREL Enterprise Development Specialist with support from the Tourism Specialist.

The implementation of the NTS requires a significant partnership effort between all the CREL Component Teams, relevant national agencies, community stakeholders, the private sector and NGOs. Success in generating community benefits while respecting national policies and local values will depend on commitments from all interested parties to this partnership effort.

Background

The Climate-Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods (CREL) project is designed to scale up and adapt successful co-management models to conserve ecosystems and protected areas (PAs) in Bangladesh, improve governance of natural resources and biodiversity, and increase resilience to climate change through improved planning and livelihoods diversification. CREL is achieving these goals and objectives through a strategy based on two driving principles – Partnerships and Sustainability.

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Its land area of 130,168 square kilometers has an estimated population of 161 million people, creating an average density of 1,237 people per square kilometer. Approximately 85 percent of the population lives in rural areas, and roughly half of these rural households do not have tenure rights to land and are directly dependent on natural resources for their survival. Despite Bangladesh's recent economic growth and aspiring middle income status, 20 percent of people remain chronically poor¹.

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) has been working with the government of Bangladesh and local communities since 1998 to better manage and conserve Bangladesh's natural resources and bio-diversity. In 2012, USAID launched its new Climate-Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods (CREL) project to extend support for the co-management of up to 25 of Bangladesh's 35 protected wetlands and forests. The collaborative management, or co-management, between government and communities has proved to be a successful model for managing the resources on which the people of Bangladesh depend. Under this model, community members engage in decision making fora with government natural resource managers and local government to participate in the management of vital natural resources and habitats. Expected outcomes include improved knowledge and capacity by communities to manage resources, and securing benefits from natural resource conservation including sharing a portion of entry fees and other alternative income projects arising from increased tourism.

Building on the lessons learned from three previous USAID funded projects, The Managing Aquatic Systems through Community Husbandry, (MACH), the Nishorgo Programme, and the Integrated Protected Area Co-management (IPAC) projects, CREL aims to strengthen the environmental, socioeconomic, legal and policy dimensions of natural resource management (including Protected Areas, wetlands and forests critical landscapes) by strengthening and expanding proven approaches that increase resilience to climate change. CREL has four (4) components: ***Component 1 – Improved governance of natural resources and biodiversity; Component 2 – Enhanced knowledge and capacity of key stakeholders; Component 3 – Strengthened planning and implementation of climate resilient natural resource management (NRM) and adaptation; Component 4 – Improved and diversified livelihoods that are environmentally sustainable and resilient to climate change.***

CREL's focus on livelihoods (Component 4) is designed to improve and diversify livelihoods that are environmentally sustainable and resilient to climate change and in so doing, increase the income of poor and disadvantaged resource dependent communities surrounding wetland,

¹ IPAC Final Evaluation Report, September 2013

coastal, and forest resources in ways that motivate them to conserve the resource and withstand future climate change impacts. *As such, Component 4 embraces eco-tourism as a tool to strengthen and diversify local livelihoods and support the co-management of natural resources.* For the past two years, CREL has been working with resource-dependent communities and identifying livelihoods that will provide incentives for preserving the resource (e.g. ecotourism, payments for environmental services), or alternative livelihoods (e.g. agriculture and its linkage to tourism or other rural based enterprises – craft for example) so that the communities will protect resources, reduce their dependency on natural resource extraction, and/or cease to unsustainably harvest resources.

The locations that the CREL project has been working in are villages and communities that are geographically some of the most climatically vulnerable and economically most disadvantaged in Bangladesh. By increasing and diversifying the income of resource-dependent individuals, the CREL Livelihoods component has been intervening in landscapes surrounding wetland, coastal and forest resources in order to reduce local dependency on these vulnerable natural resources. Most communities are highly dependent on surrounding natural resources; however their dependency increases during times of crisis including floods, cyclones, unemployment or other socio-economic hardship.

By further integrating target communities into rapidly growing subsectors/value chains CREL aims to identify and secure alternative income sources and employment opportunities for local residents. CREL has identified tourism as a priority area that will not only contribute to local livelihoods, but the broader economy of Bangladesh, hence the development of the Nature Tourism Strategy (NTS). The Nature Tourism Strategy is being developed to provide a framework to successfully guide the implementation of a Nature Tourism programme that will enhance the Bangladesh tourism product. Working with the National Parks and Wetland and Wildlife Sanctuaries and their surrounding communities, the implementation process will ensure that attention is paid to the social and economic wellbeing of community folk through revenue sharing, and that other opportunities will be identified further promoting the development of community tourism. The implementation of the NTS will require a collaborative effort with all the CREL project component teams.

The CREL project recently completed (January 2014) an Analysis for the Regional Development of Nature Based Tourism, which gives a factual account of Nature Based Tourism as is presently being facilitated in Bangladesh. The recommendations coming out of the study supports the need for the Nature Tourism Strategy (NTS) being developed by the CREL project's Component 4 team which provides a framework for sustainable tourism development as it relates to the National Parks (NP), Wildlife and Wetland Sanctuaries (WS), Protected Areas (PA) and surrounding communities. The strategy will take into consideration the recommendations outlined in the CREL report coupled with the findings and recommendations obtained from a recently conducted field study of key natural areas and the meetings held with the key stakeholders on location. The implementation of the strategy will be guided by the project's objectives and targets and will be supported by Public and Private Sector partnerships and collaboration.

Situation Review and Assessment Summary

Profile on Tourism in Bangladesh

The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) reported in 2013 that the travel and tourism industry in Bangladesh directly generated 1,281,500 jobs in 2012 or 1.8 percent of the country's total employment. Direct and indirect employment in the industry totaled 2,714,500 jobs, or 3.7 percent of the country's total employment. The WTTC predicted that by 2023, travel and tourism will directly generate 1,785,000 jobs and support an overall total of 3,891,000 jobs, or 4.2 percent of the country's total employment. This would represent an annual growth rate in direct jobs of 2.9 percent. Domestic spending generated 97.7 percent of direct travel and tourism gross domestic product (GDP) in 2012. Bangladesh's world ranking in 2012 for travel and tourism's direct contribution to GDP, as a percentage of GDP, was 142 out of 176.

Despite its economic status, Bangladesh is becoming increasingly popular amongst tourists worldwide. While tourism in Bangladesh is only just starting to serve as a foreign currency earner, the country was listed by Lonely Planet in 2011 as the "best value destination".

The (first) National Tourism Policy in 1992 recognized the importance and potential contribution of tourism to the country's economy. The Industrial Policy of 1999 further recognized the tourism industry as an important economic sector and incentives such as tax exemption were given to potential investors seeking to invest in the tourism sector. In meetings with the Bangladesh Tourism Board, they explained that the incentive programme did not attract a wave of new investments and therefore consideration is being given to the implementation of a revised incentive scheme. Once in place, it will support any new tourism investment projects that will be identified within the Nature Tourism Strategy framework

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) expects the contribution of travel and tourism to gross domestic product in Bangladesh to rise from 3.9% reported in 2010 to an estimated 4.1% by 2020. During the last few years, the country has received numerous international recognitions. Sundarbans and Cox's Bazaar were for example, enlisted as candidates in the Worldwide New7Wonders of Nature campaign in 2007, and in 2009 Sundarbans was an official finalist in the New7Wonders category. Bradt Travel Guide published its 1st edition of their tourist guidebook, "Bangladesh" in 2009, and Lonely Planet nominated Bangladesh that year as one of the top 10 countries to visit.

Tourism in Bangladesh is managed by Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) under the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism (MCAT). Tourism-related marketing and promotional activities are the direct responsibility of the Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB), which is currently launching a new campaign to promote "Destination Bangladesh" with a strong focus on Nature/Community Tourism, diverting from a mass tourism target market approach. The BTB strongly supports Bangladesh's promotion of nature based tourism and also stated that further development in promoting Community Tourism is also on their mid-term agenda.

The BTB further explained that the National Tourism Policy (2010) had emphasized nature based tourism development and also identified the historical and cultural assets of Bangladesh as being a valuable asset to the tourism sector. The BTB welcomed the fact that the CREL project is developing a Nature Tourism Strategy and suggested that both the BTB and the CREL project collaborate in both the planning and implementation of the Nature Tourism programme. The BTB cited areas of collaboration in identifying locations for development, marketing and promotions and also requested assistance from the CREL project for developing operating standards for the sector and also in revising the National Tourism Policy.

Gap Analysis of National Parks Wildlife Sanctuaries and Communities

In preparing the strategy for Nature Tourism, an assessment of the tourism landscape was undertaken to identify both the areas and the types of tourism products that were most ready for development and then place them in order of priority for development. During the preparation of the strategy, feedback was obtained from the various stakeholders (members of the regional CMC/CMOs, the CREL Livelihood Officers, community representatives, Public and Private sector tourism experts) who would be engaged in one aspect or another of the planning and implementation of the strategy.

After reviewing a number of reports previously undertaken by the IPAC project², and in consultation with the CREL Component 4 management team, five (5) areas were identified that would be the focus destinations for the Nature Tourism Strategy. These were:

- Satchari National Park
- Lawachara National Park
- Sylhet Region -Khadimnagar National Park and Rema Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary
- Khulna Region - Sundarban (Munshiganj and Chandpai) Wetland Sanctuary
- Cox's Bazaar Region - Teknuf Wildlife Sanctuary, Sonadia Island, Inani National Park, Himchari National Park

In order to better assess the tourism potential of the sites, three (3) field trips were arranged to all the focus areas mentioned above. Prior to the field trips a series of meetings were planned with various stakeholders in Dhaka representing Tour Operators (TO), Educational Institutions, Government Tourism Agencies, and the CREL management team. The primary purpose of the stakeholder meetings was to better understand their perceptions and knowledge of the CREL project objectives and the Nature Tourism component being planned; secondly to solicit their suggestions on defining their concept of Nature Tourism and identifying potential tourism products and finally; to assess the resources, both human and financial, that were presently available that could assist the projects to be implemented and sustained.

Field Trip 1

The first field trip covered the Satchari National Park (SNP), the Baikka Beel, Hail Haor Wetlands, and the Lawachara and Khadimnagar National Parks. The trip also covered Kahidimnagar Patro and Tripura Communities where participants met various community

² The IPAC Project had conducted studies on the SNP, LNP, The Sundarbans, and the Teknaf Peninsular

members. The delegation discussed tourism in general, particularly how the community felt tourism could assist in improving economic opportunities. Ideas were raised by community members and discussed regarding a community tourism project. The possibility of developing a craft project was suggested.

Satchari National Park: Satchari National Park (SNP) is located about 130-140 km northeast of Dhaka in the Paikpara Union of Chunarughat Upazila of Habiganj district (Map 2.1). It is 60 km southwest from Srimangal (between Teliapara and Srimangal). SNP stands on the Dhaka- Sylhet old highway in Sylhet division. SNP is governed by the Forest Act of 1927 as well as the Wildlife Conservation Act of 1974, subsequently Wildlife (Conservation and Security) Act of 2012. The national park was established in 2006 and covers an area of 243 ha and is a part of the 6205 ha of the Raghunandan Hills Reserved Forest. The park is well connected by rail, air and road. Visitors to the park are mainly local Bangladeshi tourist however there is a small quantity of international visitors who go there annually. Since 2009 the number of visitors has been increasing from 33,104 during the period 2009-2010; 46,715 during the period 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 the SNP saw 53, 239 visitors. 2013 recorded 59,140 visitors.

The Park is rich in flora and fauna. In reviewing studies previously done on the SNP, it indicated that the forests of the park are composed of mixed tropical evergreen and semi-evergreen plant species. The park is characterized by high rainfall and a multi-tier vegetation of rich biodiversity. SNP originally supported an indigenous vegetation of plant species. However, all of the original forest has been removed or considerably altered, turning it into a secondary forest.

The following five broad types of habitats can be found in Satchari National Park:

- High forests represented by the remaining natural forests;
- Plantations including the monoculture of exotics;
- Grasslands and bamboos;
- Wetlands, and
- Cultivated fields.

The first two habitats are the largest in extent and also important from the park management point of view. Bamboos and canes have been planted in many plantation areas, after removing undergrowth vegetation.

SNP supports a number of animal species (mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians) which are both forest-dwelling and wetland-associated species of different genera and families. Satchari has a wildlife diversity consisting of 197 species. There are more than 6 species of amphibians, 18 species of reptiles, 149 species of birds and 24 species of mammals.

Although the forest is too small to support large primate populations, Satchari is home to many primates including the globally endangered Hoolock Gibbons, Pig-tailed Macaque and Capped Langur. Other mammals such as the Orange-bellied Himalayan Squirrel and Barking Deer are found in the park. A number of bird species including the Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Hill

Myna, Oriental Pied Hornbill, White-crested Laughing Thrush, Puff-throated (Spotted) Babbler and White-Rumped Shama are found in the park.³

Observed were vast amounts of waste material scattered throughout the main entrance and the grounds of the park, suggesting a lack of a proper management structure. The staff was not readily available for business as there was no one there to meet and assist guests. The tour guides were in informal dress and carried no proper identification. I was advised that the park has not yet been fully developed, but has great potential for becoming a prominent nature-based tourism attraction, given its expanse of river tributaries, hills and biodiversity.

The IPAC study on “Eco-Tourism in the Satchari National Park” had addressed a number of recommendations for improving both the physical condition and the quality of the experience at the park. These recommendations ranged from ensuring the practice of responsible behaviour by both staff and guests to the park, introduction of Zoning, improvement of the trails, improved and more detailed training for the Tour-guides, strengthening of the CMC groups, tourism networking and improved infrastructural requirements.

Baikka Beel, Hail Haor Wetlands: The Baikka Beel, Hail Haor Wetlands are located in the Sylhet basin between the Balishira and Satgaon hills in Moulvibazar district. The Baikka Beel originates from the surrounding hill streams, and a large shallow lake in a saucer-shaped depression, bounded in the south, east and west by low hills and in the north by the plains of the Manu and Kushiara rivers. The area is surrounded by tea estates and natural forest blocks.

The aim of the sanctuary is to protect and restore aquatic biodiversity (particularly fish and birds) in Hail Haor. A secondary aim is through the visitor facilities to enhance enjoyment of the site and understanding of nature, the value of wetlands and need for their conservation. The sanctuary and its facilities are a model that can encourage replication of similar sanctuaries elsewhere in the country.

Baikka Beel is a 100 ha Wetland Sanctuary located in Hail Haor a large wetland seasonally extending from 3,000-12,000 ha in north-east Bangladesh. It comprises of open water with emergent vegetation (mostly lotus), and a fringe of native swamp forest planted over ten years ago. Originally, it was protected to conserve and restore fish and it supports about 90 species of fish, but populations of wintering water birds rapidly increased.

A visitor tower with several permanent interpretive displays was opened in early 2007. This is the only such facility in the country and this is the only substantial community managed wetland sanctuary in the country.

Visitor numbers have not been recorded as reliably as would be ideal, but are estimated in the low thousands per year and the visitor mix include student groups, diverse government officials, and a wide range of foreign visitors. The figures reported by the CREL Component 4 team stated that 1,186 visitors were recorded at the site in 2011, increasing to 2,462 the following year, and with 2,873 reported in 2013.

³ Integrated Protected Area Co-management (IPAC); Eco Tourism in Satchari National Park January 2013

The Interpretation/Information Centre at Baikka Beel provides very good and interesting information on the flora and fauna found there at the Wetland Sanctuary. The centre is a modern facility that is fairly well maintained. On the other hand the public facilities (bathrooms) were unsanitary and the general area surrounding that area is not being properly maintained. This site is a good tourist attraction, particularly for bird watchers. Linking Baikka Beel to other attractions in the surrounding areas could provide a very interesting day-tour package. Access to Baikka Beel by road is extremely challenging. During the monsoon season however, the water level rises by considerable heights and tours to the Beel can then be accessed via boat from surrounding villages, providing yet another attraction.

Lawachara and Khadimnagar National Parks: Lawachara National Park (LNP) is located northeast of Dhaka in Kamalganj sub district of Maulvi Bazaar district and covers an area of 1250 hectares, a part of the 2740 hectare west Bhanugach Reserve Forest. The park lies between the Dholai River on the east and the Manu River on the north. The park is surrounded by tea estates and is well connected by rail, air and road. It is 180 kms. from Dhaka, 90 kms. from Sylhet and 8 kms. from the town of Sreemongal. The nearest airport is Sylhet.

The topography of the park is undulating with slopes and hillocks ranging from 10-50 meters along with numerous streams flowing through the park.

There are six broad habitat types in Lawachara and the adjoining area:

- High forest represented by the remaining patches of natural forest
- Plantations including the monoculture of exotics
- Grassland and bamboo
- Wetlands
- Tea estates
- Cultivated fields

The forests are mixed tropical evergreen and semi green forests. The forest area was earlier used for jhum⁴ cultivation by forest dwelling communities.

Lawachara National Park is rich in avifauna and is home to 237 species of birds which is representing nearly one third of the country's known bird species. Hoolock Gibbon and Capped leaf monkey (Nishorgo, 2006) are the flagship species for the National Park.

The key strengths of Lawachara NP are the area's exotic ambience, and the variety of ethnic communities in and around and its wilderness areas. It is one of the few protected areas in the country that can offer this diversity of products ranging from attractions, accommodations (Eco-Lodges), food and beverage facilities, tourist gift shops and craft production.

⁴ relatively permanent, graduated terraces on the sides of hills and mountains to conserve water and reduce soil loss; and shifting agriculture, in which tracts—called **jhum**—are cleared by burning, cultivated for a limited period of time, and then abandoned for a number of years to allow regeneration of the natural vegetation and nutrients in the soil..

Because of its location and easy accessibility, the LNP is a major attraction amongst visitors. The park is open for visitors throughout the year, although visitation reduces considerably during the rainy season (May to August) each year. The visitors to Lawachara are attracted by the area covered with terraced tea estates, patches of tropical rain forest, pineapple plantations and lemon groves. Visitors recorded during the period 2009-2010 were 91,602; 2011 recorded 105,790 visitors, 2012 recorded 114,026 visitors and in 2013 a slight decline with 96,383 visitors recorded.⁵

Entry to the National Park was free up until 2009 when in November 2009 the entry fee system was introduced. The rates being charged (up until today) for entry into the park are: Adults 20 TK, Students 10TK, Foreigners US\$5.00, Parking 25TK, Filming 6,000 TK per day and for Picnics 25TK per person.

There are about 18 villages near Lawachara, two of them (Magurcharapunji and Lawacharapunji) located within the boundaries of the park. Indigenous peoples in the area include the Christian Khasia people, the Hindu Tripuri people, the 10 Tipra people, and the Monipuri people. The rest of the population is mostly Muslim migrants from Noakhali, Comilla, and Assam⁶. This area has great possibilities for becoming a prime Community Tourism Zone.

Lawachara NP is one of the most visited of all of Bangladesh's National Parks. When we arrived at the entrance there was little evidence of a management structure in place as visitors arriving at the park appeared to have free access. On site we met briefly with the Forest Department Ranger and visited the site of the FD's Lodge used mainly for their visiting staff. Investigating whether or not the Lodge could be used as a revenue centre for the FD by renting to potential visitors, we were advised that it would not be allowed.

Khadimnagar National Park (KNP) located very close to Sylhet town also has fairly good transportation available. The site has a few tea garden tracks surrounding a small artificial forest. There are no demarcations for the forest, and thus is susceptible to trespassing. There are some trails into the forest however which have not been fully developed. Proper signage is not provided. Rest areas and bathroom facilities are not available. The park is not fully operational. However, the park has an advantage over other areas as there is very little development there. Thus, a proper development plan can be implemented from the ground level.

Visited Communities: Kahidimnagar Patro and Tripura Community (weaving)

The team visited two communities in the area, the Kahidimnagar Patro Community and the Tripura Community to look at the community tourism potential and the possible linkages to both National Parks. The Kahidimnagar Patro Community is an ethnic group with ancestral background linkages to Mongolia. The delegation tried to identify any cultural or historical assets that could be preserved and presented to visitors but were unable to identify any. It appeared that the younger generation were no longer interested in old traditions that were rapidly dying.

⁵ IPAC study: Eco-Tourism Lawachara National Park, June 2012

⁶ Analysis for Regional Development of Nature Based Tourism, 2014, CREL

On the other hand, the Tripura community displayed great weaving talents and we were able to both purchase and see a demonstration of the items being made. This could be a very important asset to the community and to the region in general as small artisan centres could be developed in or near the park sites as an added tourist attraction providing both an educational experience for the visitors and economic opportunities for community members.

Also notable was the architectural styles of the traditional homes with their intrinsic thatched roofs and bamboo screen windows and very thick earthen exterior walls. This design, and other ethnic dwellings found in the Sundarbans region, could be the base design for small cultural centres and eco lodges to be developed in those regions. (The concept will be discussed with one of Dhaka's University's School of Architecture).

Field Trip 2

The second Field Trip was held in the Southeast Zone of the Sundarbans to Munshiganj where the delegation overnighted and then the following day, travelled by road unto to Khulna.

The Sundarbans: The Sundarbans Reserve Forest is part of the larger Sundarbans Biosphere Reserve, a World Heritage site recognized by UNESCO, found in both India and Bangladesh, with over 23,000 square miles of mangrove ecosystem found within Bangladesh. Hundreds of endangered Bengal tigers live in the reserve, with exact populations difficult to estimate, as they are rarely observed by visitors or scientists, despite their regular man-eating attacks on local residents who harvest resources in the reserve.

Other charismatic species more likely to be observed are the huge Estuarine Crocodile, abundant Spotted Deer, and Otter. Bird watching is a key attraction with 250 species among which are many wading birds that populate the banks of the mangroves. International news was made in 2009 when research was formally presented on a previously unknown hot spot for Irrawaddy Dolphin and the Ganges River Dolphin within reserve waters.

The tourism industry is frequently referenced as a highly important stakeholder/user group with the potential to provide extensive benefits to the Sundarbans Reserve Forest. However, there is no consistent analysis of the tourism sector's impact on the ecosystem or neighboring communities. There is no existing tourism plan in effect to help measure how tourism management is functioning at present, nor is there any management authority within the reserve that has tourism management as part of its mandate.

The total number of visitors to the Sundarbans Reserve Forest is close to 100,000 visitors per year according to Forest Department records. Foreign visitors make up less than 2% of this total. Management of tourism in the Sundarbans Reserve Forest is therefore largely a matter of managing visitors from Bangladesh.

As it pertained to the areas of focus for the Nature Tourism Strategy, the focus was placed mainly on the South West Region of the Sundarbans in close proximity to the community of Munshiganj. The field trip allowed for a stay at the Joar Eco-Lodge in Munshiganj and a boat

tour of the wetlands which included visiting the Kalagachia Eco Tourism Centre manned by the Forest Department

At the Eco-Lodge the delegation had the opportunity to meet and have discussions with the owner of the property. A discussion took place regarding his future plans in expanding the facility and the possibility of additional Eco-Lodges being developed in the area. He supported the idea and explained that he did in fact have plans for further expansion but needed to complete the first phase by completing two additional rooms. We discussed the possible linkages to the local shrimp farmers and cash crop farmers and were advised that they do supply his property. The Joar owner welcomed the idea of the NTS and suggested that the strategy should address the development of additional attractions, an increase in room stock and an improvement to the Munshiganj Bazaar area. He also suggested increasing the amount of river tours being offered into the Mangrove Forest.

The group observed the need for further assistance in some structural upgrading of the facility and additional hospitality training for the staff which would help in upgrading the facility. The Eco Lodge has been identified as a possible pilot in a project to introduce International Green Globe Certification to the hotel and tourism sector.

While at the resort, the Joar Resort Management arranged a boat tour with a resident boat owner taking us through the wetlands. Working with small community entrepreneurs from the area, the resort is able to offer unique excursions to their guests. It is a very exciting experience for visitors and with proper organization and training of the local operators, tours such as this one could become a very marketable attraction for the area. However, further infrastructural development is required for docking purposes and more efficient safety measures and standard operating procedures for the boat tours also will be necessary.

The training of the boat operators as guides is also an activity for consideration. The delegation was unable to determine an exact number of informal boat operators in that area. However, a rough estimation was made of approximately twenty persons that could offer that service.

There is also an opportunity for that area to collaborate with the recently launched Relief International “Promotion of Local Culture in the Sundarban Impact Zone in Bangladesh through Cultural Ecotourism and Entrepreneurship” project. The project will be implemented in Khulna and Sathkhira districts with engagement of private sector tour operators from all over Bangladesh. The overall objective of that project is to enhance respect for local culture and ecology in the Sundarban Impact Zone in Bangladesh through development of cultural tourism and entrepreneurship through popularization of cultural sites and development of the culture of ecotourism to promote the ecological and cultural significance of the Sundarban Impact Zone. The project is generously supported by the European Union. CREL had previously met with the project’s Chief of Party who had expressed an interest in collaboration with CREL.

Leaving Munshiganj, the team went to Khulna for a meeting with a number of Tour Operators to discuss the Nature Tourism potential in Bangladesh and the viability of CREL’s proposal to introduce a Nature Tourism Strategy. The meeting was arranged by the CREL Regional Manager and over 10 Tour Operators attended. The Tour Operators were presently operating tours to the

Sundarbans however, realized that there was a strong need to diversify the Bangladesh tourism product. They felt that a focus on the cultural and historical aspects of Bangladesh would provide a viable tourism product.

In addressing the Nature Tourism Strategy and its link to the National Parks, Wildlife and Wetlands, the Tour Operators felt that the strategy could open new opportunities for developing products for niche markets both locally and internationally. They however raised the fact for the Parks to become major tourism attractions a great deal of work needed to be done to upgrade their physical condition and the facilities they offered.

Field Trip 3

The third and final Field Trip took the team to Cox's Bazaar and the Teknaf Peninsular. Cox's Bazaar is the main tourist resort of Bangladesh.

The Teknaf Peninsula forms a continuous line of sandy beaches along the Bay of Bengal, 120 km long, reportedly the longest beach in the world. This coastal border is backed by foothills, which are forested in patches. Wetlands line the Naf River, which forms the eastern boundary of the peninsula and the western border of Myanmar (Burma). The Teknaf Peninsula is flanked by one barrier island, several kilometers north, Sonadia Island, and one sedimentary continental island 10 km south, St. Martin's. St. Martin's is fringed by the only coral reef found in Bangladesh, one of the few coral-algal communities in the world.

The climate on the peninsula is moist; the rainy season falls during monsoon, between June and September. Cyclonic storms develop on the Bay of Bengal between April-May and October-November. Temperatures average between 25-30 degrees centigrade year round. The tourism high season extends from December through March, the months of driest weather without severe storm threats.

Cox's Bazaar, which forms the northern boundary of the study area, is occupied by a rapidly growing number of hotels, restaurants, and tourism facilities. The Cox's Bazaar Upazila includes 25% public land, 60% of which is illegally occupied. In Cox's Bazaar, the hotel boom is rapidly expanding without a city sewage system or adequate drainage areas for septic systems. Hoteliers, tour operators, and residents agree these deficiencies are threatening the sanitation of the sea and beaches⁷.

Cox's Bazaar is heavily developed with over 350 hotels with close to 106,000 rooms⁸. During the high season it was reported that it would not be unusual to have bus loads of visitors visiting the area on a daily basis bringing in excess of 10,000 persons each day. Speaking with some of the tourism stakeholders, they informed us that development in the region has happened in an ad hoc fashion in the absence of development guidelines. (Ironically, the Cox's Bazaar region is also the only region that has had a Tourism Master Plan developed). Cox's Bazaar is a mass

⁷ Teknaf Peninsular Community-Based Ecotourism Strategy, IPASC Project, April 2009

⁸ The statistics was given to the group by the Hotel Association President who had advised us that they do not have proper records of tourism data and therefore cannot substantiate the accuracy of this information. The Region however is the tourism Mecca of Bangladesh and during the high season, hotels do record high levels of occupancy

market destination with large numbers of visitors annually and therefore that area can potentially be the main target area for attracting visitors to other tourism attractions in the region.

There are 42 agricultural demonstration sites in the area that the CREL project is presently implementing, creating an excellent opportunity for agro-tourism linkages.

Within a travelling distance of two hours, the Cox's Bazaar region is connected to Sonadia Island, the Teknaf Wildlife Sanctuary and the Himchari and Inani National Parks. In addition, there is the community of Shilkkali with the Garjan Forest which could be considered a point of interest on a planned combined day tour.

Sonadia Island: Sonadia Island is a 25 minute boat ride off the coast of Cox's Bazaar. It covers an area of approximately 4,406 hectares and has an inhabitation of about three hundred people divided into three small communities. The island is a nesting ground for sea turtles, and it offers miles of expansive white sand beaches. Sonadia Island has great tourism potential. However, the development has to be carefully planned, implemented, and monitored with strict carrying capacity guidelines that must be followed. Tourism development for Sonadia is long-term and detailed studies, environmental assessments, and strategic planning must be carried out prior to any development taking place. Efforts should be taken to ensure that the social conditions such as housing, sanitation, educational and health facilities are provided for the residents prior to any tourism development.

Inani National Park: The Inani National Park is found between the Himchari and Teknaf Game Reserve, covering an estimated 7,000 hectares of tropical forest. The area has been proposed as a National Park, with an additional 3,000 hectares of surrounding Reserve Forest for community livelihood activities. The Inani area is rich in biodiversity and under extreme threat due to cyclonic damage, illegal logging, and fuel wood collection. The park and reserve forest would be managed by the Forest Department as a Protected Forest Area (PFA).

The delegation visited sites at the Inani National Park (INP) which consisted of newly constructed buildings which were all empty and again there was no one on site to guide visitors. It was later discovered from the Divisional Forest Officer that the Park is still under development and the buildings are not yet utilized. The Inani National Park is said to be the main location for the sighting of elephants and that in it could be an activity to attract visitors to the Park. There were no available statistics on visitors to the park.

Teknaf Wildlife Sanctuary: From the INP, we went to the Teknaf Wildlife Sanctuary (TWS) via the community of Shikkal where brief discussions were held with the Tour Guides and some members of their CMC. The main concerns raised at that meeting was their working relationship with the Forest Department who expressed their dissatisfaction with certain operating procedures particularly those pertaining to park maintenance and security. They also expressed a strong desire to develop a tourism project in their community.

Teknaf Wildlife Sanctuary (TWS) is a Protected Area broadly classified as a tropical evergreen forest. TWS has been under the supervision of co-management since 2005 when the USAID funded project IPAC's preceding project 'Nishorgo Support Project' started working with 5 pilot

areas. The *Nishorgo* Support Project (NSP) had introduced the concept of Co-Management Committees to assist the Forest Department in their endeavors to conserve the sanctuary. As a result, the local population remains intricately involved in the preservation of their natural surroundings.

Teknaf Wildlife Sanctuary, renamed in 2010 from the former Teknaf Game Reserve, covers an area of 11,615 hectares. The Teknaf area is one of the most bio-diverse areas of Bangladesh. Approximately 286 species of birds have been recorded being found on Teknaf Peninsula, including coastal and wetland habitats. The area still supports the largest population of Asian elephants in Bangladesh.

The TWS appeared to be one of the better sites for tourism development. It is well laid out, has beautiful vistas and the Interpretation Centre, although in need of some upgrading, provided very good information for visitors. Like the SNP, the TWS also has a dormitory building in need of upgrading as well, which could also easily be redeveloped making it into a revenue centre for the location. Visitation to the TWS is low but that can be attributed to the lack of their proper marketing and promotional activities. Visitors to the WS in 2011 was recorded at 1,879, in 2012 - 1,317 and in 2013 - 642, three years of continuous decline.

The group met with the Himchari CMC Chairman, who advised that the vicinity in close proximity to the Wildlife Sanctuary had great potential for being zoned as a potential Eco-Tourism destination as within that region, in addition the National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuary, there are over five ethnic communities with available lands for development. The area also boasted a very viable fish farm that could also be used as a tourism attraction site.

Himchari National Park (HNP): The group visited the Himchari National Park which is located on the outskirts of Cox's Bazaar and on week-ends during the main tourist season, the park receives thousands of visitors over the weekend periods. At the entrance to the park there are many stalls erected for a variety of vendors with goods ranging from food to arts and crafts (mostly imported). The park sits opposite to the beach and therefore attracts visitors who are also looking for a beach experience.

The physical state of the park is deplorable. The entire area is covered with garbage arbitrarily strewn throughout the grounds by the visitors, and again there is no apparent management supervision in place. The entrance lacks proper signage outlining rules to be observed. Himchari NP, like all the other National Parks, charges a very low entrance fee of 20 TK per person for local visitors and therefore attracts great numbers of visitors that use the parks for a variety of recreational activities not suitable for protected areas. The majority of visitors to the HNP are those persons visiting Cox's Bazaar.

Again the HNP has great potential for development as it has a wide variety of attractive vistas and trails, waterfalls and plant life. Unlike the other National Parks however, this Park is operated by private concerns under a lease agreement from the Forest Department. There is obviously very little, if any, standard operating requirements as it may relate to protected areas in the lease agreement.

It must also be noted that under the Integrated Protected Area Co-management (IPAC) project a detailed long-term Community-Based Ecotourism Strategy was developed for the Teknaf Peninsula which outlined key development initiatives that would reposition the Cox's Bazaar Region in the international tourism marketplace. The plan was never implemented and is somewhat outdated however the Nature Tourism Strategy will revisit the plan and identify any of the recommendations that can be incorporated into the NTS.

The three field trips covered sites totaling approximately 115,465 hectares with an overall population of approximately 672,000 (including Sundarban East, South West and ECA).

Accommodations

During the field trips, the team stayed at two of the Eco-Lodges whose developments were partially supported by USAID project assistance. On the first field trip, the group stayed at the Nishorgo Eco Resort (Litchibri) in close proximity to the Lawachara NP. On the second field trip, the group stayed at the Joar Eco Lodge, in Munshiganj.

Both properties offered unique community experiences and demonstrated the value of Eco Lodges in the Community/Nature Tourism scenario. Both properties were fully booked during our stay. However, both managers expressed the desire to improve on their marketing and promotional strategies and expressed that the NTS would address that. Both managers felt that with the upcoming thrust to upgrade and promote the National Parks and Protected Areas as key tourism attractions, incorporating them in the overall NTS would be a great benefit to both properties and to tourism development in the regions generally.

Stakeholder Meetings and Consultations

As was earlier mentioned, in addition to the site visits, meetings were also held with a wide cross section of stakeholders from both the public and private sectors. The meetings focused on the Nature Tourism Strategy being planned by the CREL project to obtain feedback from on their opinion and vision for the development of Nature Tourism, and the role it can play in the tourism landscape in Bangladesh.

Their overall awareness and perception of nature tourism was very positive. All the groups we met, which included, Tour Operators, Hoteliers, Forest Department Senior Officials, Department of the Environment Officials, Educators, Training Consultants and Senior Tourism Officials, were in full support of the development of a Nature Tourism Strategy. It was pointed out to them that the strategy would focus on improving the tourism experience by introducing a product that incorporated educational and cultural experiences as well. The stakeholders felt that with the planned strategy in place by offering a “new” product to the tourism mix the new marketing and promotional activities that will have to be incorporated would be targeting a new market segment moving away from the mass market visitors, something that most persons at the meeting felt needed urgent attention.

It was openly expressed however that the National Parks, although they were very attractive natural asset, were not yet up to a standard that would warrant a national promotional programme. In order for the Parks to play a major role in the development strategy they felt that

the Parks would require major upgrading of the facilities they offered on site, upgrading and management of the trails, further training for the tour guides and an effective management structure put in place to oversee the day-to-day operations of those sites that would also have the capability to implement an integrated marketing programme.

In assessing the tourism potential of the National Parks and the Wetland Sanctuaries, it became very obvious that they all shared a major common problem, the lack of proper Management and Supervision in the overall operational capabilities. This manifested itself in the poor conditions of the park, the obvious lack of management presence on site and the open expressions of dissatisfaction between the CMCs and the FD being voiced by some CMC members.

In the meetings with the various stakeholders within the park management structure (CMCs/Forest Department), it became clear that there were some “grey” areas as it related to the management capabilities of the CMC’s and also the role and functions of the Forest Department as the policy guidelines were obviously not clear to all the stakeholders.

Resulting from the outcomes from the field trips, it became clear that a key component of the strategy would be training to develop their management capabilities and bring to them an awareness of the tourism sector and more specifically the Nature Tourism Strategy and the impact it will have on those natural resources

Another concern that was raised in our deliberations was the fact that although the Forest Department thought Nature Tourism to be a viable tourism alternative, there was some apprehension when it came to having the National Park and the Protected Areas incorporated as part of that tourism mix. Some FD Officers expressed fear that tourism development would have a devastating effect on the environment, and felt that by promoting a Nature Tourism Strategy that incorporated the National Park and Protected Areas it would result in unregulated tourism investments taking place within the park boundaries. They were assured that this was not the intention of the strategy and we took the opportunity to share examples of places that integrated tourism into ecologically sensitive areas.

We introduced the general concept of environmental certification for the management of the parks as a means of controlling development and providing very strict responsible development guidelines. In particular, we introduced the concept of Audubon Certification for the National Parks and sighted the development of the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park (BJCNP), a protected area in Jamaica that in fact had some accommodations developed within the park boundaries but whose development was guided by strict environmental guidelines. The strategy will allow for the selection of a NP as a pilot in a project introducing environmental certification for Parks and Protected Areas and based on lessons learned from that initiative, implement a programme to have all Parka and WS Environmentally Certified.

With regard to the upgrading and branding of the NP, we also discussed with the Forest Department the possibility of creating a theme for all the National Parks and PAs and the possibility of working with students from an Architectural School to develop a standard concept that would be used at the entrances of all the NPs. Such an activity would help in creating a “Brand” for the Parks.

In Dhaka meetings were held with agencies involved in hospitality education and training to investigate ways and means of collaborating when developing and implementing training programmes that would be required once new tourism enterprises were identified. (At our meeting with the Motel and Guest House Association President in the Cox's Bazaar, he indicated that 50% of employees in the hotels in that area were imported from outside the Cox's Bazaar Region. That was due to the fact that there was a very limited skilled workforce in Cox's Bazaar due to the lack of proper education opportunities and the access to vocational training in the hospitality sector for the young people from the area

The last meeting held during the mission, was with the Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB) who welcomed the work being undertaken by the CREL project as it addressed not only nature tourism but economic development in the rural areas. The BTB spoke of their efforts in reviewing the overall performance of Bangladesh Tourism and sited one of their areas of focus was in Community/Nature Tourism. They expressed a desire to work with CREL and requested that both organizations collaborate in the planning, development and implementation of the tourism projects as it pertained to Nature/Eco/Community Tourism. They cited a number of areas that they could work together and asked that the CREL liaise with them when implementing the Nature Tourism Strategy.

The willingness of the BTB to work with the CREL project was encouraging as the marketing and promotion of the tourism projects/products under consideration by CREL will have to rely heavily on the BTB. The CREL Component 4 Nature Tourism Strategy will implement a successful Nature Tourism programme and the BTB will have full responsibility of maintaining and sustaining those efforts.

Summary of Site Visits and Meetings

It is without doubt that Bangladesh has many opportunities for developing a very strong Nature/ECO/Community Tourism product as the country is blessed with vast natural forests and wetlands, beautiful landscapes and is steeped in history with a very rich and vibrant culture.

The Bangladesh tourism product at present does not however, meet what could be considered ‘international standards’. The tourism product can be best described as any service or facility that offers some experience, recreational or otherwise, that satisfies the wants or needs of a consumer whether domestic or international. The product does not however meet international standards as it has not been yet been developed to a stage where it would be considered by international tour companies as marketable and ready for large scale promotion. The BTB realizes that presently the Bangladesh tourism product, in many instances, generally lacks basic safety standards, standardized operating procedures, has yet to comply with all local laws and regulations and has no guidelines for meeting the basic environmental standards and procedures necessary for the international market tour operators.

Developing and implementing the Strategy for Nature Tourism for Bangladesh is a challenging task that cannot be implemented overnight and will require very careful planning and collaboration among the key stakeholders both in Government and the Private Sectors. Its successful implementation will require total buy-in from those stakeholders.

Tourism in Bangladesh is seen as a viable means for economic development particularly in the rural areas. The stakeholders involved are all supportive of the development and expansion of the sector and there is a very capable team able and willing to see to its success.

Product Assessment

Having visited the sites and assessed the conditions of the present tourism products that are being considered in the NTS, a rating system was adapted defining their readiness and the level of upgrading that would be required of them to reach an acceptable standard for them to be considered in participating in a national marketing and promotional campaign. The criterion that was used in the assessment was the same one that was developed for Community Based Tourism Enterprises in Jamaica. The criteria identified three tiers of project readiness – Tier 3 - (Start-Up) Visitor Ready, Tier 2 - Market Ready and Tier 1 - Export Market Ready⁹. Figure 1 below demonstrates the three tiers of product development and the process that was applied to all the sites and projects that were visited on the three Field Trips.

It should be noted that The National Community Tourism Policy for Jamaica is being used as a guideline for the development and implementation of Community Tourism throughout the Caribbean Region. There are many similarities between Bangladesh and Jamaica, Both countries have developing economies where natural resources are an integral part of the tourism product, and tourism is heavily focused on engagement with communities. Both countries are also heavily

⁹ The National Community Tourism Policy for Jamaica, October 2011

impacted by the effects of climate change and are implementing donor-funded projects to bolster climate change resiliency.

Figure 1: The Three Tiers of Product Development:



All the sites visited on this mission fell between the Tier 3 (Start-Up Visitor Ready) and the Tier 2 Market Ready stage of project development (Figure 2-The Assessment and Evaluation Spreadsheet), with most veering closer to Tier 3 Status. This can be considered a “positive” as the planning and development processes for advancing to the final stage can be developed from the ground level up.

The Nature Tourism Strategy is designed to take the Bangladesh tourism product to the Tier 1 stage of readiness. In the process the strategy will ensure that plans are put in place that will help to improve the management and supervisory capabilities of the staff, improve the quality of training of the Tour Guides, clean and upgrade the facilities and institute a marketing plan that will increase their earning power and improve their image.

The strategy will identify and prioritize the destinations that have the potential to provide the most social and economic gains to their communities and the nation in general, at the same contributing to the resiliency of local communities through improved planning and livelihoods diversification. It will be practical, innovative, inclusive and sustainable. Its success and viability rests upon a strong marketing strategy and strong collaboration with key Government agencies responsible for the promotion of tourism in Bangladesh.

Figure 2: Project Site Assessment and Evaluation

Project Site	Visitor Impact Esthetics	Educational Value	Recreational Value	Status of Facilities	Accessibility	Tier Category
Satchari NP	1	1	1	1	2	1
Lawachara NP	2	2	3	2	3	2
Khadimnagar NP	3	1	1	1	2	1
Chandpai WS	3	2	2	3	2	2
Sanadia Island	3	2	2	N/A	2	N/A
Inani NP	1	1	1	1	2	1
Teknuf WS	4	4	3	3	4	2
Himchari NP	1	1	2	1	4	2
Baikka Beel WS	3	3	3	2	1	1
Accommodations	Visitor Impact Esthetics	Educational Value	Recreational Value	Status of Facilities	Accessibility	Tier Category
Nishorgo Eco Resort (Litchibri)	3	3	3	4	4	2
Joar Eco Lodge	4	2	3	4	4	2

Rating: 1-5; 1=Very Poor; 5=Excellent

Visitor Impact: First impressions on seeing the site, appearance; Visual appeal; Services provided; First Aid

Educational Value: Does the site provide general information on the site; Brochures; Demonstrations; Audio-visual; Informative signage; Rules and Regulations

Recreational Value: Activities, Recreational facilities, Quiet zones, Defined picnic areas;

Status of facilities: Sanitation; Trails; Guest facilities;

Accessibility: Ease in reaching the location

Project Status: Tier 1 -Start-up. Tier 2 -Market Ready; Tier 3- Export Market Ready

Strategy Rationale

Tourism, properly planned, implemented and managed, is an extremely valuable economic and educational activity. It spans many economic sectors and is integrally linked to a destination's natural, social, cultural and historical environment.

Tourism connects a variety of constituencies and can support sustainable development between man and nature. Tourism businesses consist of a variety of products and services and the development of a viable tourism industry will provide new economic opportunities for the communities in which they operate. For example food and crafts production can generate considerable employment and profits for local populations, when volume production and delivery at set quality standards can be met by the local producers.

Until recently, tourism in Bangladesh appeared not to have been properly planned and managed and at a Strategic Scenario Planning Workshop for the Tourism and Hospitality Sector, organized by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the European Union (EU) in April 2013, the stakeholders attending, highlighted the fact that tourism development in Bangladesh was greatly affected by the deficiency of authentic tourism data. They further went on to state that tourism development was hindered as potential investors were finding it difficult to make strategic planning decisions mainly for the lack of accurate data. There were over sixty (60) participants from various sub-sectors of tourism attending the workshop.

It was further expressed that in order for the Government of Bangladesh to resolve these adversarial effects, the Government should seek technical assistance from organizations such as the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) who could assist in establishing proper systems to conduct the collection of the country's tourism statistics and revenue data. In conclusion, there was general consensus that there were in fact some positive outlooks observed that presented opportunities for tourism development covering a wide cross section of the tourism mix. It was projected that by the year 2020 Bangladesh would require approximately 40,000 additionally trained skilled workers for the hospitality sector.

By developing a Sustainable Nature Tourism programme in the rural communities, it will provide not only new job opportunities, but in the planning and development process provide the local suppliers/manufacturers with information on environmental best practices to be applied to their businesses. The promotion of local sourcing will therefore require specialized training and technical support for new investments in areas such as environmental management. This will have a positive impact on the communities by bringing to them a greater awareness of environmental issues and their resilience to climate change.

Tourism development is however not a short term "quick-fix" remedy for economic development and the implementation process will be carried out in three basis phases : Building Capacity to manage and monitor the planned initiatives; Redefining and improving the tourism product (the National Parks in the first instance) and finally marketing, promoting and monitoring of those

resources. The third phase has to be done in collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh's Tourism Agencies as they have the overall responsibility of marketing and promoting the country's tourism product. Phase 1 will be the first three (3) quarters of implementing the NTS, Phase 2 the fourth to the sixth (4-6) quarter and Phase 3 the final two quarters of the CREL project.

The strategy will identify other opportunities for community tourism development such as Eco Lodges, Artisan Centres and Tourist Stops and will provide a framework to guide the overall development and promotion of Nature Tourism in Bangladesh. The strategy will guarantee that (a) a quality tourism product will be developed and (b) strict environmental management guidelines will be incorporated in their operations. These two factors will improve the livelihood of the residents in the communities through increased economic opportunities generated by tourism development.

Special Projects to support the implementation of the Nature Tourism Strategy

The following projects are recommended activities that will assist the project meet its targeted goals and objectives.

Product Development:

1. Universal Theme for all the National Parks and Wetland Sanctuaries: It is proposed that a standard "Theme" be developed for the entrances of all the NP and WS. At present the park entrances are drab and lack imagination and the general architecture does not represent the culture or history of the regions in which they are located. In a meeting with the BRAC University head of the School of Architecture, it was agreed that the students would be given the opportunity to develop a National Park Concept incorporating the style of architecture found in the surrounding villages. A Memorandum of Understanding is to be developed between the CREL project and BRAC University. (Phase 1)
2. Upgrade existing dormitories at both the Satchari National Park and the Teknaf WS. By upgrading those dormitories and providing better residential services this venture could be a viable income earner to the Park. (This activity will have to be financed through PPP as USAID does not allow for any construction-related activities under CREL). Students and Professors doing field trips and conducting research projects can rent the facilities. The Park management can also look at the possibility of developing Educational Tours using the dormitories as the required accommodations. (Phase 1)
3. Ensure that all members of staff and Tour Guides are issued with uniforms. In addition all the Rangers on patrol should wear proper identification. The design and production of the uniforms can be a viable economic opportunity for one or more communities. (Phase 1)
4. Development of Artisan Centres at the National Parks. As part of the NP entrance landscape the construction of Artisan Centres should be considered as part of the

services/attractions offered by the Parks. Artisan Centres can provide an outlet for the manufacturing of art and crafts and allowing visitors to see the process of making a specific craft item adds value to the experience and the product. These centres will be operated by community groups and revenue collected will be used to fund any planned activity to support their community. (Phase 2)

5. Tea/Tourist Stops. Travelling to the National Parks and to communities in the rural areas is done mainly by road. This again provides opportunities for the persons in the various communities to establish tourist stops that provide refreshments (traditional) bathroom facilities and possibly a display of local arts and craft. These Tourist Stops can also be yet another project for the students of Architecture. It is also recommended that this could also be a project that collaborates with the Bangladesh Board of Tourism. (Phase 2)
6. Accommodations are a crucial element in promoting Nature Tourism and the development of more Eco Lodges close to selected NP and WS should be considered. The areas in close proximity to the Sundarbans (Munshiganj), and within communities in close proximity to the Teknuf WS and in the Lawachara NP areas appear to be the most likely areas for such development. This is due to the fact that those areas presently have more tourist traffic. However their success will be dependent on a good marketing and promotional campaign and good service. CREL will work in collaboration with the Board of Investment within the Ministry of Commerce to develop “Investment Portfolios” to attract these new investments. (Phase 2)
7. Corporate Sponsorship for Park Upgrades. Leading corporations operating in Bangladesh should be approached to sponsor some aspect of the Park Upgrading Programme. For example a company could sponsor the refurbishing of a boardwalk, park benches, bathroom/rest room facilities etc. Their company logo could be delicately place on those areas to promote their company and their Corporate Social Responsibility community Activity. (Phase 1)
8. Develop an Agro-Tourism programme linking the tourism sector to the agricultural demonstration sites being assisted by the CREL Project in the Cox’s Bazaar region. There are now over 42 agricultural demonstration projects being assisted by the CREL project in the Cox’s Bazaar region and that region has the largest number of hotels and visitor accommodations in Bangladesh. Developing economic linkages between the farmers and the hotels will be a viable venture as this would reduce the hotels demand for importing certain food items. At the meeting with the Motel and Accommodations President in Cox’s Bazaar, he had expressed his willingness to begin working directly with those assisted farmers and therefore CREL will launch a Pilot Project and from the lessons learned expand the programme to a larger number of the hotels there. (Phase 2)

Environmental

9. The Nature Tourism Strategy will incorporate environmental management as a critical component in all training programmes by including ‘Environmental Best Practices’ in every activity. The strategy will propose that Environmental Certifications should be

introduced as part and parcel of the Parks Management Strategy (PMS), including the Audubon Certification. A Park will be selected in the first instance as a Pilot Project and the lessons learned from that process be adapted for all National Parks and Wetland Sanctuaries. Similarly, Hospitality Certification will also be considered for the Eco Lodges and the Green Globe Certification programme will be introduced to both the Joar Eco Lodge and the Nishorgo Eco Resort (Litchibri) as a Pilot Project that would eventually be used at all resorts wishing to “go green”. (This has been endorsed by the BTB) (Phase 2)

10. Park Clean-Up. This activity must be given priority as all the National Parks and the WS are in dire need of waste removal and a sustainable waste management programme implemented. In the first instance School and University students will be invited to do a “National Park Clean-up Programme” to be followed by a nation-wide educational programme targeting educational institutions focusing on proper waste management and recycling. Coupled with this CREL will work with the DOE to establish a Solid Waste Management Programme for National Parks and WS. (Phase 2)
11. Sonadia Island: Developing Sonadia Island as a tourist destination is a long term tourism project that will require very detailed planning and careful implementation and therefore cannot be the sole responsibility of the CREL Project. The project can however take the lead in establishing a Task Force to begin working on the tourism planning opportunities for Sonadia Island which could eventually become an environmentally certified destination. (Phase 3 – after successful completion of Phases 1 and 2. To be done in collaboration with the FD, DOE and the BTB).

Capacity Building

12. Resuscitating the CMC Association is a requirement. It was reported that over the past couple of years members of the Association for one reason or the other, began paying less attention to meeting as a group which resulted in a breakdown of communications among the various CMC/CMOs. Revitalizing the Association will provide opportunities for closer collaboration among their groups and for them to share the lessons learned from their individual experiences. (Phase 1)
13. Tourism is a new component to the CREL project and the main stakeholders need to be sensitized about tourism and its impact on the economy, and, the interrelationship between tourism and the natural resources of Bangladesh. Both the CMC/CMO and the Forest Department officials need to better understand tourism and the role it plays in national development. They need to understand how the sector works and the interrelated activities between the various economic sectors. The strategy will develop new training programmes that will bring a greater awareness of sustainable tourism practices and the impact it will have on the natural resources. (Phase 1)
14. Study Tours for some of the key stakeholders from the CMC/CMOs, Forest Department, Department of the Environment and key CREL project personnel to visit other

destinations that have implemented similar initiatives is recommended. It would be of great value for the stakeholders to visit other National Parks that have been internationally certified (Appendix 2) and have strong tourism/community involvement. (Phase 2). Two National Parks that should be considered are the Blue and John Crow Mountain National Park in Jamaica and the Iwokrama National Park/International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development. Both are protected areas and have incorporated successful eco-tourism programmes within the park boundaries without compromising the natural integrity of the parks. The Forest Department is advised to study both these models and from the lessons learned, implement similar projects in the National Parks in Bangladesh. Appendix 2 give a brief description of both these National Parks.

15. Tourism Task Force. The strategy will set up a Tourism Task Force to sit as advisors to the CREL Component 4 Team and work with them to review project activities as it relates mainly to product identification and marketing. Tourism is a growing economic sector in Bangladesh and its development process should include inputs from key players such as Government Agencies (Tourism), Tour Operators, Financial Institutions, Educational Institutions and Community Representatives. Their buy-in of programme activities will make the implementation process less challenging. (Phase 1)
16. Once the upgrading and branding of the National Parks and other Protected Areas have been completed, the Task Force will work with the CREL Component 4 Team to investigate the process which will allow for the increase in admission to the National Parks and Wetland Sanctuaries. (Phase2/3)
17. Development of a Site-Based Revenue Sharing Policy for the National Parks and Wetland Sanctuaries. This policy will assist in providing an equitable framework for all the relevant Institutions/Stakeholders to share in the incomes generated for the NP and WS which, in the long run, will provide the needed resources for sustaining those areas. (Phase 2)
18. Developing “Eco-Tourism Development Zones” in the strategic areas within the CREL project boundaries. (Phase 2 in collaboration with the relevant government agencies).

Rationale for Prioritizing the National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries and Strategy Framework

After in-depth consultation with the CREL Component 4 Team and feedback from various stakeholders it was agreed that, in order of priority, the following would be the main focus areas for consideration in developing the Nature Tourism Strategy:

- Cox’s Bazaar Region - Teknuf Wildlife Sanctuary, Sonadia Island, Inani National Park and the Himchari National Park
- Khulna Region - Sundarban (Munshiganj and Chandpai) Wetland Sanctuary
- Sylhet Region -Khadimnagar National Park and Rema Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary

- Lawachara National Park (Management)
- Satchari National Park (Management)

Cox's Bazaar:

It was felt that the Cox's Bazaar Region had the greatest potential for tourism development as the area boasted two National Parks and a Wetland Sanctuary, Sonadia Island a number of ethnic communities and the area was linked to a growing agro industry. The location is probably one of the most beautiful areas of Bangladesh surrounded by mountains, beautiful land and seascapes and vistas, all within two hours of the country's major tourist destination.

Supporting this was the fact that a Tourism Master Plan had already been developed for the area which at least provided a developmental framework from which the stakeholders could work. In addition, a detailed Community-Based Ecotourism Strategy had also been developed by the IPAC project in 2009. That strategy is now outdated and needs to be revisited. The NTS will not be focusing on the overall development plan of Cox's Bazaar but on the region within close proximity to the Teknaf WS, and the other National Parks.

There is a very close working relationship between the major stakeholders from both the public and private sectors in that region and the CREL Regional Office has an excellent rapport with those stakeholders. They all share common goal for the area and as a result the CREL team felt that the Teknaf Peninsula would be the number one area of priority. There are no "quick fixes" for that area but the strategy will identify the development guidelines that will help the project meet its desired results.

Khulna Region:

The Khulna Region is poised for further development in the area of accommodations, and River Tours which could be supported by the overall upgrading of the waterfront of the village of Munshiganj. The focus of development for that area would primarily be Eco Lodges, Boat Tours and the upgrading of the Munshiganj commercial area leading to the docks. The development strategy will include identifying possible means (through PPP) to complete a "facelift" for the bazaar area of Munshiganj providing Tea/Guest Stops, Craft outlets, Food and Beverage (traditional) services and basic landscaping. It is also suggested that the Tea Companies be approached to look at integrating tours as at present there is the Tea museum located in that area and that is added value to the visitor experience.

Sylhet Region:

With regard to the Sylhet Region - Khadimnagar National Park and Rema Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary both parks have very little development in place and therefore would allow for proper development plans to be put in place and implemented on a timely phased basis.

For both Lawachara National Park and the Satchari National Park it was agreed that the area of focus would be on capacity building as there was a very obvious breakdown in management practices and effective communications between the CMCs and the Forest Department.

Prioritizing Strategy Framework

After careful consideration of all the assessment reports from the site visits, discussions with the groups of stakeholders, the assessments of the status of the project sites and the expectations of the communities and the tourism stakeholders, the decision was taken that the main focal areas in developing the Nature Tourism Strategy framework would be divided, in order of priority into five (5) strategic components, and would be applicable to all the selected regions:

- Capacity Building
- Establishing Public/Private Sector Partnerships
- Product Development
- Marketing
- Implementation and Monitoring

Strategy Framework Sequence of Activities:



The Nature Tourism Strategy Framework

Tourism Task Force and the Public/Private Sector Partnership Strategic Group

The strategy will incorporate in the first instance both a Tourism Task Force and a Private/Public Sector Partnership Strategic group that will serve as an advisory arm for the implementation of the Nature Tourism Strategy. By establishing these two bodies it guarantees easier buy-in from all the stakeholders, it provides transparency of the project activities and it is expected that both groups will be able to facilitate the implementation process for projects and programmes under the CREL project.

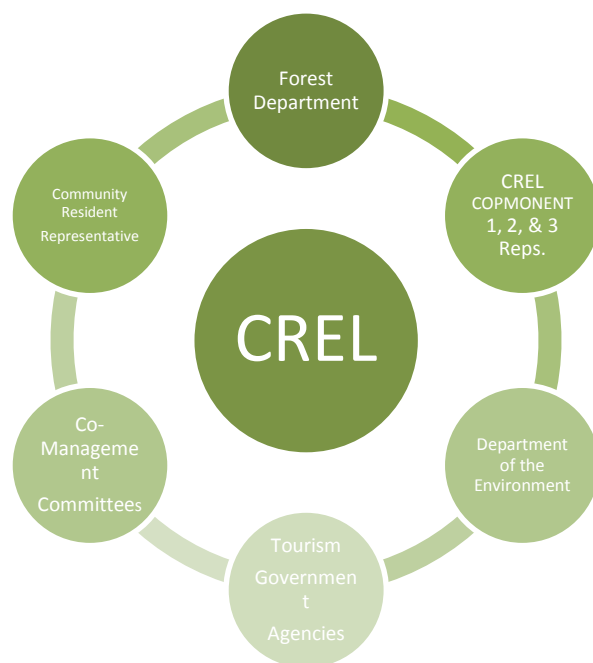
Capacity Building is the first and most important step in the NTS as it speaks to the capability of those persons responsible for the management of the nation's natural resources to fully understand the co-relation between those resources and the tourism sector and the ability to work together as a team.

In establishing the capacity building framework specific programmes will be developed for each of the main stakeholders, for example providing guidelines to assist the CMO/CMCs in better understanding their role in park management and maintenance, business planning and tourism awareness in general. For the community representatives the strategy will develop training programmes in basic business planning, tourism awareness, environmental “best practices” and project management.

The Tourism Task Force will in the first instance be comprised of representatives from:

- The CMO/CMCs
- Government Tourism Organizations (BTB)
- Community Representatives
- Forest Department
- Department of the Environment
- CREL Component 1, 2 & 3 Representatives
- CREL Component 4 (The Facilitators)

Figure 3: Tourism Task Force - (CREL Component 4 as Facilitator)

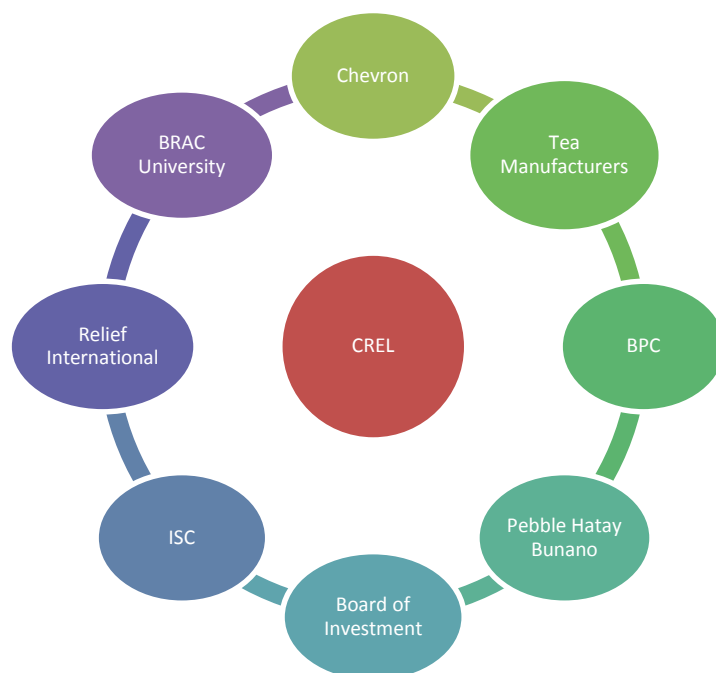


Working in an advisory capacity the Task Force will be the ‘Think Tank’ for the Component 4 team as it relates to their activities in tourism related matters. They will be in a position to “open doors” when there are apparent bureaucratic hold-ups and offer their expertise advice on matters pertaining to business development and Government Policy.

Strengthening nature based tourism in Bangladesh both allows and requires opportunities for Private Sector partnerships and collaboration. In the Lawaracha Region in particular, the possibility of collaborating with the Tea Companies will be explored to incorporate tours of the Tea Gardens and Tea Museum as part of the Community Tourism tour packages; and working with the Chevron Corporation through their Community Outreach programme will also be pursued. Chevron has a budget of approximately US\$5m that they will contribute for the development of a Community Tourism project. In a meeting with their officer responsible for Community Outreach we were advised that CREL, through the PPP Specialist, submit a proposal to them identifying a specific project requiring assistance. It must be noted however that the project must be situated in the A strong Public/Private Sector Partnership programme can assist in providing technical assistance, financial contributions and in some instances expert advice to CREL initiatives.

Figure 4 outlines the recommended Strategic Partnership Group that would work in collaboration with the CREL Fundraising and Leveraging Specialist to foster relationships that would play an important role in identifying funding and other strategic partnerships. The group is however not limited to only those companies/agencies listed as CREL should seek to invite new partners (Garment Manufacturers for example) on board as the necessity arises.

Figure 4: Strategic Partners – Public/Private Sector Initiatives – leveraging and Fundraising (CREL as Facilitator)



Step 1 - Capacity Building Component

Capacity building will focus on two strategic categories of stakeholders, Community personnel and Institutional stakeholders. To build capacity at the community level training programmes will be introduced which will allow those individuals in the communities to build and enhance their existing knowledge and skills in areas such as hospitality services, tourism awareness and methods to operate a successful business. This will require working with institutions such as the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) and the Industry Skills Council (ISC) for training in hospitality. The CREL Component 4 Team will be required to work in tandem with those institutions to incorporate in the training material components that addresses environmental best practices and issues relating to the impact of Climate Change on communities.

This activity will contribute to meeting the target of persons with increased climate change resilient economic benefits. The training will also require activities that will create situations that will allow persons in the communities to engage in the process of learning and adapting to change.

Building the capacity at the institutional level will target the CMOs the CMCs, the Forest Department personnel and the CREL Field Officers. Tourism is relatively new to the project and therefore all the stakeholders should be made aware of the dynamics of this very sensitive sector. Building their capacity would not involve creating new institutions, rather modernizing and

supporting them in their organizational capabilities, and effective methods of management and revenue control. As it relates to the CMOs/CMCs Business Development training will be a critical area for them as it will build their management and administrative capabilities in operating the National Parks and better equip them to be more enterprising.

One of the most critical areas in the capacity building process is to provide the Forest Department and the CMOs/CMCs with the necessary tools to effectively manage and maintain the operations of the National Parks and the Protected Areas. The NTS will review the present plan for the collection and the equitable distribution of entry fees collected at National Parks.

Past USAID's projects in Bangladesh that focused on improved natural resource management (NRM) resulted in CREL inheriting 23 local based co-management organizations for forests and wetlands, about 900 village level community organizations in forest ecosystem, and in Hail Haor eight community based Resource Management Organizations and five Federations of Resource User Groups. These organizations formed the bridge between a vast number of communities and the Government of Bangladesh as they played a vital role in improved NRM as they related to National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Wetlands and other Protected Areas..

Financial sustainability of these organizations to run continued activities for conservation and improved NRM has been one of the main concerns of both government and community people. As a result collecting entry fees from tourists that visited those areas was initiated a few years ago and the revenue earned was shared between government and communities in forest Protected Areas and some community organization in Wetland areas. With the increased number of visitors to most Parks over the past two years and with greater anticipated numbers expected once improvements are made to the sites, a more integrated Collection Strategy¹⁰ was discussed but was never finalized. The NTS will do a comprehensive review of the Entry Fee Collection Strategy and make recommendations for a manageable and equitable method of collection and distribution.

Target Audience:

- Forest Department Officials
- CMCs and CMOs
- Community persons
- CREL Field Officers (Livelihood Officers)
- Educational Institutions

Recommended Activities:

- Establishing the Tourism Task Force
- Preparation of Training Material – Business Development; Hospitality Training; Tourism Awareness, Organizational Skills, Tour Guide Administration

¹⁰ CREL Draft Plan for Entry Fee Collection 2010

- CMC/CMO National Association – Development of new Operating Guidelines, Code of Conduct
- Policy Review – Forest Department, CMO Assessments
- Review the Plan for Entry Fee Collection/ Development of a Site-Based Revenue Sharing Policy for the National Parks and Wetland Sanctuaries.
- Introduction to International Certification Programmes and Environmental Best Practices (Green Globe, Earth Check, Audubon Certification)
- Identifying Eco-Tourism Development Zones
- Case Studies/Study Tours – Jamaica, United Kingdom, USA,

Targeted Results Assisted:

- Local Institutions with Improved capacity to address Climate Change
- Hectares under improved NRM
- Policy areas change to enable climate resilient co-management
- People with Climate Change resilient economic benefits

Responsibility for Implementation:

- Component 4 Livelihood Manager
- Institutional Development Manager (Component 2)
- Enterprise Development Specialist
- Tourism Specialist (Part-time)

Step 2 - Public/Private Sector Partnerships (PPP) and Collaborations Component

One of the targeted results of the CREL Project is to leverage US\$20 million from Private/Public Sector Partnerships to support the project goals and to improve responsiveness to climate change. Engaging the assistance of both the Private and Public sectors in implementing some of the CREL activities will enable this. The Private Sector can provide technical expertise and has the capability to also provide services traditionally procured and delivered by the Public Sector or in some instances, international donor agencies.

Partnerships can be in kind as well as in monetary contributions. In some instances corporate sponsorships can also be solicited. For example, the refurbishing of the park facilities in all the National Parks could be done through a sponsorship programme from corporate donors where their companies and/or services could be promoted by signage strategically placed throughout the parks.

Another example is the proposed partnership between the CREL project and BRAC University where students will design a theme for National Parks for which the selected design will be used as the standard design for all Forest Department Parks and Protected Areas. This initiative is very cost effective as the students will not require payment. The project would assist with their

transportation to the parks, accommodations on site visits and on completion the project will be required to recognize the students/University with the provision of a plaque erected on site.

The PPP component of the project is critical to the capacity building and product development segments of the NTS being implemented.

Target Audience:

- Corporations operating in Bangladesh
- Tea Companies
- Universities and other Educational Institutions
- Financial Corporations
- Donor Agencies (collaboration)

Recommended Activities:

- Establish the PPP Strategic Group
- Development of Presentations to companies and Private Sector bodies (CREL Project and investment opportunities)
- Investment Portfolios (Eco Lodges)
- Craft Development Initiative
- CREL/BRAC University Thematic Design of NP – MOU to be signed
- Chevron Community Initiative

Target Results Assisted:

- US\$20 million leveraged

Responsible for Implementation:

- CREL PPP Specialist

Step 3 - Product Development Component

Once the Capacity Building and the PPP Components of the strategy have been established the focus will be on the improvement and development of existing National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries in addition to new tourism projects/products (Eco-Lodges, Artisan Centres, Tourist Rest Stops, Tours). The Product is the means by which revenues will be generated, employment opportunities provided and entrepreneurial skills developed.

The strategy's primary target areas will be focusing on the restructuring and upgrading of the National Parks and Wetland Sanctuaries in order to raise them to a Tier 1 level (Export Market Ready status). This will involve a nation-wide National Park clean-up programme, a refurbishing programme to improve the facilities (rest room, trails, signage and rest areas), defining

recreational areas for specific activities (picnic area for controlled patronage), training of Tour Guides and the development of revenue centres (Artisan Centres and Dormitories). It is at this stage of implementation that the strategy will review the Guidelines for the Collection and Utilization of Revenue Earned from The Protected Areas that was developed by the Forest Department, and apply for an increase in admission To the National Parks

The development of Eco-Lodges will be carefully considered both in defining the right location and the designs to be used in construction. Developing a unique product will help in positioning the marketing strategy. Using the various styles of Architecture found in the various ethnic communities throughout Bangladesh provides both a cultural and educational experience for the visitor. In developing Eco-Lodges concepts consideration of the markets to be targeted will be taken into account. Eco-Lodges accommodations can vary in prices from budget rates to very exclusive facilities attracting a very distinguished international market. (For example the Belmond Khwai River Lodge in Botswana has a room rate of US\$2,600 per night).

The Nature Tourism Strategy will help define the target market for the Bangladesh Eco-Lodges. Finally, cultural aspects of any tourism product is extremely important both for providing an experience for the visitor and for providing economic opportunities for the individual communities. In developing the cultural tourism product two specific areas have been identified for developmental consideration: Artisan Centres and Tourist Rest Stops. The Artisan Centre can be developed as an attraction within the entry area of National Parks, replacing the “gift shop” concept or within a nearby community. These centres would provide for the community artisan to demonstrate the process in making his craft and therefore provide yet another experience for the visitor. This experience has a psychological impact on the visitor and they are usually willing to pay a higher price for those products rather than those from a shelf in a gift shop. The Tourist Rest Stops would be developed in rural communities found enroute from one destination to another providing restroom facilities and food and beverage services.

Target Audience:

- Forest Department (NP, WS and PA)
- Community Entrepreneurs
- Private Investors
- Educational Institutions

Recommended Activities:

- Developing the Theme and Brand for NP and WS
- Uniforms and proper ID for Tour Guides and all NP Staff
- Refurbishing and product upgrading (Park Clean-Up)
- Development of Investment Portfolios - Artisan Centres, Eco-Lodges, Tourist Stops
- Environmental Certification – NP and Eco-Lodge

Target Results Assisted:

- Hectares under improved NRM (Certification of NP)
- Funds leveraged from Public/Private Sector leveraging

Responsible for Implementation:

- Tourism Task Force
- Tourism Specialist
- PPP Spec
- CREL Component 4 Manager
- CREL Enterprise Development Specialist
- CREL Component 3 – Landscape and Planning
- BRAC University (Thematic Design and Conceptualization of Eco-Lodges)
- CMC/CMOs

Step 4 – Marketing Component

Marketing Nature Tourism will require the full cooperation of all the key stakeholders but the primary responsibility in its planning and implementation will rely on the expertise of a Tourism Specialist working in collaboration with the BTB. The execution of the Marketing component of the NTS will be the responsibility of the Bangladesh Tourism Board. All the key stakeholders will have an integral role in defining the product and assisting to identify the location of new project sites to be developed. Planning the marketing will require in-depth research into present travel trends to Bangladesh, tourism statistics, travel data and tourism expenditure. (This information could not have been obtained in the short period of the country visit and also due the lack of proper data within the tourism organizations).

The main objective of the Nature Tourism Strategy is:

- Growing the total value of nature tourism within the protected areas in a way that meets sustainability objectives

The marketing component framework will support the planning and development of proper visitor management and sustainable development guidelines as this will mean the difference between profitability and merely covering costs. As a result, within the marketing component ways to increase the value of the visitor's stay thus adding to the revenue potential of the local businesses will be investigated. Tourism arrivals need to be at least maintained (particularly in the Cox's Bazaar Region) and/or grow during the peak periods in the other designated Protected Area sites. It will also be important that identify ways and means to increase tourism arrivals and expenditure during shoulder months for many of the businesses in the rural areas and those in close proximity to the NP showing low visitor arrivals,

Sustainability Aims

The drive to increase the year-round value of tourism may seem contrary to sustainable development and it may appear that little attention is being paid to environmental issues. The marketing component of the strategy will ensure that sustainable guidelines are therefore incorporated and adhered to in all aspects of the planning process. This is based on the fact that:

- In order for visitors to contribute to the socio-economic interests of local communities, businesses need to be financially healthy and the sector needs to be growing in a sustainable way.
- In order to attract those people to visit the area who will enjoy its special qualities and therefore be motivated to protect the environment, marketing is vital.
- By using marketing to increase the value of tourism rather than concentrating on increasing volume, the areas will have the opportunity to derive a larger economic benefit per visitor of environmental impact

This marketing component will therefore implement programmes and activities to support a sustainable Nature Tourism programme and will always be cognizant of the fact that the National Parks' core function of protecting the landscape, while at the same time providing the basis for attracting visitors who's spending will benefit local businesses and communities, will be protected. Sustainability will play a significant role in developing the National Parks and Wetland Sanctuaries "Brand". Every effort will be taken to ensure that the marketing activities do not damage the perception of the area as an environmentally sensitive destination.

Branding the National Parks will be an important activity in marketing Nature Tourism and the marketing communications activities will be designed to seek opportunities of highlighting that special "sense of place" within the NP and WS such as promoting and celebrating locally foods the culture, and highlighting the areas' biodiversity such as the wildlife experiences, the flora and low impact recreational opportunities

In the early stages of the implementation of the marketing activities a vital activity of the NTS will be the hosting of a workshop exploring ways in which sustainable values can be incorporated into destination marketing. This workshop will invite representative from the relevant government agencies responsible for PAs, the environment, and tourism, TOs, PPP, and community representatives.

The National Parks greatest opportunity appears to lie largely in the general domestic market. There is the potential however to attract niche segments from within Bangladesh, Europe and China. One of the marketing component's activities will be to investigate the reasons why visitors travel to these regions and will cover a wide cross-section of visitors ranging from "soft activists", such as weekend strollers, to "committed adventurers" - the hardcore hikers and nature lovers, with more emphasis on the former "softer activists". Those activities will also investigate persons who are looking for a relaxing and stress free adventure, but at the same time invigorating experience, which may involve just relaxing in a scenic environment, or their participation in light outdoor activities.

The marketing component will focus on four other strategic areas:

- Target Markets and Market Segmentation
- Image and Repositioning the destination
- Market Infrastructural Development
- Marketing Communications Strategy

Target Markets will be investigated and assessed – those visiting family and friends, doing business or straight leisure (shopping, entertainment, recreation etc). Trends in new developing markets – the Eco Tourist, Nature lovers, Bird Watchers, persons interested in cultural and historical activities will also be investigated

The image of Bangladesh and her Natural Parks and Protected Areas is influenced primarily by the following facts that Bangladesh conveys an impression of wild, beautiful, tranquil, rustic and scenic environments. In spite of this Bangladesh is still not on the radar as a prime tourist destination and therefore the marketing strategies that will be implemented will change that image and reposition the destination. This will be a collaborative exercise working with the BTB.

It is important that a very strategic and focused Marketing framework is outlined to guide the promotional activities planned for those critical targeted areas. This is fundamental in enabling the National Parks and Bangladesh's best prospects to be identified and highlighted with the most appropriate messages through cost-effective channels. This will be achieved through proper advertising channels and promotional campaigns having the stakeholders (Eco-Lodges, Attractions, TO) attend both local and international trade fairs.

The communications component of the marketing programme will be a key element to the overall marketing strategy and a user friendly website for all our National Parks and Wetland Sanctuaries and the Eco-Lodges will be developed.

Marketing is a long-term activity and will begin early in the NTS developmental stages first focusing on research and data collection.

Target Audience:

- Visitors to Bangladesh and to the National Parks and Protected Areas
- Tourism Entrepreneurs (accommodations and attractions)
- Tour Operators
- BTB

Required Activities:

- Marketing Strategy Workshop – Developing Sustainable Tourism Framework
- Tourism Awareness Publicity Campaign
- Research – developing research tools and material
- Visitor Surveys
- Establishing Tourism Data Bank

- Branding Strategy
- Developing Website and Promotional Material
- Trade Shows and Promotional Activities

Target Results Assisted:

Local Institutions with improved capacity
 People with increased climate change resilient economic benefits

Responsible for Implementation:

- Tourism Specialist
- CREL Component 4 Manager
- CREL Economic Development Specialist
- CMO/CMC Representative
- BTB Marketing Team

Step 5 – Implementation, Monitoring and Indicators Component

The implementation of the Nature Tourism Strategy (NTS) requires a significant partnership effort between all the CREL Components, relevant national agencies, community stakeholders, the private sector and NGOs. Success in generating community benefits while respecting national policies and local values will depend on commitments from all interested parties to this partnership effort.

The development of Nature Tourism product is a complex procedure that requires detailed research and planning, careful implementation and consistent monitoring and adaptation to ensure sustainability. Tourism is not a quick fix to address systemic underdevelopment, and the desired results of any nature-based tourism initiative may not likely be realized until twelve months to fifteen months of implementing the strategy.

The management of the NTS will invite input from the Tourism Task Force to serve in an advisory capacity to the project supporting the day-to-day operations under the direct supervision of the CREL Enterprise Development Specialist.

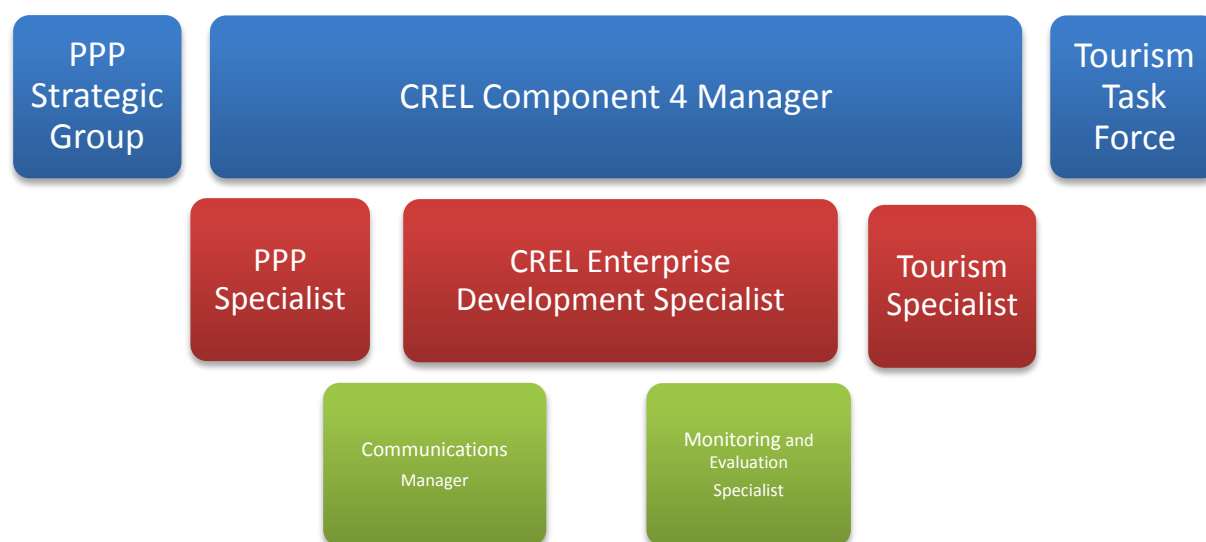
Technical Assistance (TA) from the Tourism Specialist will be required during various stages of implementation specifically in the areas of developing and delivering the Tourism Training Components (TTC) for the Capacity Building component of the strategy; working with the Public/Private Sector Partnership Specialist (PPP Specialist) to develop the Tourism Investment Portfolios (TIP). In addition the Tourism Specialist will be required to assist in developing the Marketing Framework for the strategy and be the liaison between the CREL project and the government tourism agencies (BTB/BPC). The CREL Component 4 Manager will have the overall responsibility of managing the implementation of the NTS.

As it relates to the Public/Private Sector Partnerships the PPP Specialist will work with the PPP Strategic Group to pursue partnership opportunities with the relevant agencies, and will be responsible for developing various presentation portfolios to be used when meeting with the external organizations to solicit their assistance. The CREL Communications Manager will be responsible for all the Public Relation activities that will support the Nature Tourism programme and the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Specialist will monitor the activities of the strategy to ensure the results are being met and that the programme is in keeping with the budget allocations.



Craft Development in a Bangladesh Community

Figure 5: The Organizational Structure for the implementation of the NTS.



Project Activities and Indicators

Component 1 – Capacity Building				
Target Audience	Recommended Activities	Implementation Responsibility	CREL Targeted Results	NTS Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forest Department, - CMCs and CMOs - Community Representatives, - CREL Field Officers (Livelihood Officers - Educational Institutions, - Tour Guides 	Establishing the Tourism Task Force, Develop Training Material(Tourism and Environmental Best Practices, Tour Guides, Business Development)), Revamping of CMC National Association, Development of Eco-Tourism Zone,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Component 4 Livelihood Manager - Institutional Development Manager (Component 2) - Enterprise Development Specialist - Tourism Specialist (Part-time) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local Institutions with Improved capacity to address Climate Change - Hectares under improved NRM - Policy areas change to enable climate resilient co-management - People with Climate Change resilient economic benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CMOs and CMCs National Association Members, 5 High Schools, BPC trained in Climate Change Resiliency - 3,967 ha under improved NRM (Lawachara, Satchari, Rema-Kalenga and Khadimnagar NP) Audubon Certified - 4,000 stakeholder households with increased capacity to adapt to impacts of climate change - 1 Eco-Tourism Zone identified and Legislated - 100 Tour Guides re-trained - Tourism Task Force Established - 100 persons trained in Hospitality Skills and Environmental Best Practices - Study Tour completed (Jamaica/UK)
Component 2 – PPP Partnership and Collaboration				
Target Audience	Recommended Activities	Implementation Responsibility	CREL Targeted Results	NTS Indicators
Corporations, Tea Companies, Universities, Financial Institutions, Donor Agencies, Private Sector Agencies	Establish PPP Strategic Group, Develop Corporate Presentations, Develop Investment portfolios, Craft Development initiative (Pebble Hatay and Aarong), BRAC University Park design concept, Chevron Community Outreach	CREL PPP Specialist	US\$20m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - US&5m leveraged from Public/Private Sector support - 250 women trained in craft through the Pebble Hatay collaboration - One Artisan Centre erected in a National Park - 3 Park Entrances redesigned by BRAC Architectural Students - Chevron Community Outreach Programme assistance for one community
Component 3- Product Development				
Target Audience	Recommended Activities	Implementation Responsibility	CREL Targeted Results	NTS Indicators
FD's NPs, WS and PAs	Developing the Park Theme Concept, Uniforms for all NP staff, Upgrading and Refurbishing of all C4 targeted NP and WS, Artisan Centres, Tourist Stops and Eco-Lodges promoted, Environmental Certification for Eco-Lodges and NP (Pilot Project)	Tourism Task Force Tourism Specialist PPP Specialist CREL Component 4 Manager, CREL Landscape and Planning Specialist, CREL Enterprise Development Specialist BRAC University CMCs and CMOs	Hectares under improved NRM Funds Leveraged from PPP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 500 people with increased climate change resilient economic benefits - 1 Eco-Lodge GG Certified - 5 Park Clean-Up Campaigns Launched and completed - 2 Tourist Stops refurbished and operating (Teknaf Area) - Agro -Tourism Programme implemented with CREL demonstration sites and Cox's Bazaar Motel and Hotel Association

Component 4 - Marketing				
Target Audience	Recommended Activities	Implementation Responsibility	CREL Targeted Results	NTS Indicators
Visitors to Bangladesh, Tourism Entrepreneurs, Tour Operators, BTB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marketing Strategy Workshop - Tourism Awareness Publicity Campaign - Research and Visitor Surveys - Establishing Tourism Data Bank - Branding of NPs - Website Development - Preparation of Promotional Brochures - Trade Shows 	Tourism Specialist CREL Component 4 Manager CREL Economic Development Specialist CMC/CMO Representatives BTB Marketing Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local Institutions with improved capacity to address climate change issues - People with increased climate change resilient economic benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 Marketing Strategy Workshop held - Tourism Awareness Publicity Campaign launched (newspapers and TV) - NP Brand developed - Website developed - Promotional material and brochures developed (BTB) - 3 Trade Shows attended - BTB Marketing and Planning Department staff trained to address climate change issues
Component 5 Implementation and Monitoring				
Target Audience	Recommended Activities	Implementation Responsibility	CREL Targeted Results	Indicators
CREL Component \$ NTS Team				

Activities and Projected Timeframes

Component 1- Capacity Building								
Activity	1 st . Quarter	2 nd . Quarter	3 rd . Quarter	4 th . Quarter (End year 1)	5 th Quarter	6 th . Quarter	7 th Quarter	8 th Quarter (End Year 2)
Establishing the Tourism Task Force								
Preparation of Training Material								
CMC/CMO National Association								
Policy Development and Review								
Establish Eco-Tourism Zone								
Introduction of International Certification Programmes								
Case Studies/Study Tours								

Component 2 - PPP								
Activities	1 st . Quarter	2 nd . Quarter	3 rd . Quarter	4 th . Quarter (End year 1)	5 th Quarter	6 th . Quarter	7 th Quarter	8 th Quarter (End Year 2)
Establish PPP								
Development of Presentations								
Develop Investment portfolios								
Craft Initiatives								
BRAC University Park Design and Dormitory Refurbishing (Teknaf and								
Chevron Community Outreach								
Component 3- Product Development								
Activities	1 st . Quarter	2 nd . Quarter	3 rd . Quarter	4 th . Quarter (End year 1)	5 th Quarter	6 th . Quarter	7 th Quarter	8 th Quarter (End Year 2)
Developing the Theme and Brand for NP and WS								
Uniforms and proper ID for Tour Guides and all NP Staff								
Refurbishing and product upgrading (Park Clean-Up)								

Activities	1 st . Quarter	2 nd . Quarter	3 rd . Quarter	4 th . Quarter (End year 1)	5 th Quarter	6 th . Quarter	7 th Quarter	8 th Quarter (End Year 2)
Development of Investment Portfolios- Artisan Centres, Eco-Lodges, Tourist Stops								
Environmental Certification - Pilots								
Component 4 - Marketing								
Activities	1 st . Quarter	2 nd . Quarter	3 rd . Quarter	4 th . Quarter (End year 1)	5 th Quarter	6 th . Quarter	7 th Quarter	8 th Quarter (End Year 2)
Marketing Strategy Workshop								
Research								
Visitor Surveys								
Establishing Tourism Data Bank								
Branding								
Developing Website and Promotional Material								
Trade Shows and Promotional Activities								

Component 5 – Implementation and Monitoring								
Activities	1 st . Quarter	2 nd . Quarter	3 rd . Quarter	4 th . Quarter (End year 1)	5 th Quarter	6 th . Quarter	7 th Quarter	8 th Quarter (End Year 2)

Appendix 1 – Internationally Certified National Parks

- **Neusiedler See National Park (A)**
- **Fertő-Hanság National Park (HU) 2003; re-evaluated 2010**
- **Krkonoše National Park (CZ)**
- **Karkonosze National Park (PL) 2004; re-evaluated 2011**
- **Oulanka National Park (FIN)**
- **Paanajärvi National Park (RUS) 2005; re-evaluated 2011**
- **Maas-Schwalme-Nette Nature Park (D/NL) 2007; re-evaluated 2012**
- **Thayatal National Park (A)**
- **Podyjí National Park (CZ) 2007**
- **Vätsäri Wilderness Area (FIN), Øvre-Pasvik National Park (NO), Øvre-Pasvik Landscape Protection Area (NO), Pasvik Nature Reserve (NO) and Pasvik Zapovednik (RUS), the first trilateral area 2008; re-evaluated 2013**
- **Prealpi Giulie Nature Park (I) and Triglav National Park/ Julian Alps Biosphere Reserve (SL) 2009**
- **Bavarian Forest National Park (D) and Sumava National Park (CZ) 2009**
- **Saxon Switzerland National Park (D), Bohemian Switzerland National Park (CZ) and Elbe Sandstones Protected Landscape Area (CZ) 2012**
- **Escaut Plaines Nature Park (B) and Scarpe-Escaut Regional Nature Park (F) 2013**

Neusiedler See-Seewinkel National Park <http://www.nationalpark-neusiedlersee-seewinkel.at/>

During the interwar years, intentions to establish a nature protection area around the Neusiedler See were noticeable. It is thanks to the determined effort of some men and women and the work of the Naturschutzbund (ÖNB - Austria's first nature conservation organisation) that the government agreed to carry out the plans. The law that governs the establishment of the National Park was finally passed in 1992 after some tough negotiations.

There are 30 permanent employees working in the National Park and about another 30 contractors mainly to guide visitors. The work of the Neusiedler See-Seewinkel National Park Authority includes habitat management, public relations and visitor service. Research is outsourced to various institutes and organisations, as the National Park itself does not employ any scientific personnel. Approval procedures are carried through by the provincial government of Burgenland, situated in Eisenstadt, and not by the National Park administration.

Fertő-Hanság National Park <http://www.ferto-hansag.hu/index.php?lang=en>

The Fertő-Hanság National Park Directorate manages the protected areas of national importance in the county of Győr-Moson-Sopron. From the slopes of the Bakony Mountains to the Sopron Mountains, from the Danube to the meadows and oak forests in the Rábaköz region, this area preserves natural beauty, several protected landscapes and also ones worth for protection.

Together with the joint Austrian national park our national park is an area acknowledged by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) since 1991. The park is managed according to conservation zones the core of which is Lake Fertő, the westernmost Eurasian steppe lake. Due to its outstanding fauna and flora the Hungarian part of the Lake Fertő became a landscape protection area in 1977, whereas the Hanság in 1976.

In 1979 the area was announced a Biosphere Reserve by the UNESCO-MAB program, from 1989 on it is a Ramsar site. Its international importance is underlined by the fact that the entire Fertő region, together with the Hungarian and Austrian national parks, embraced by the shoreline settlements received the title World Heritage from the UNESCO World Heritage Convention in 2001.

The Krkonoše Mountains National Park <http://www.krnap.cz/en/>

KRNAP – KPN these are the official abbreviations of both national parks that together cover an area of about 425 km² (KRNAP 370 and KPN 55). In 1986 the buffer zone of an additional 184 km² of area around the Park of the Krkonoše Mts. was declared. The Administrations of both national parks with their seats in Vrchlabí and Jelenia Góra-Sobieszów were authorized to take over the responsibility for the fate of the wildlife and landscape in the Krkonoše Mts

Paanajärvi National Park (RUS) 2005; <http://parks.karelia.ru/paanajarvi/index.html>

Long and narrow, Lake Paanajärvi is situated amongst the fells in the north-western part of the republic of Karelia, not far from the Russian-Finnish border. Rivers Oulankajoki and Kuusinkijoki that originate in the Kuusamo Commune, Finland, feed the Lake. The Olanga River connects Lake Paanajärvi with the region's largest Lake, Pyaozero. Every summer, Brown Trout, the greatest asset of Park's Salmonidae, force their way upstream through foaming rapids to reach the calm back-waters in the upper part of the River, where in autumn the fish spawn on the rocky bottom. The river route of the Brown Trout takes it through spruced flood-lands, pine stands growing on sandy soil, and past fells covered by dwarfed tundra vegetation.

Brown Bear, Reindeer, Otter and other taiga animals inhabit these forests. In this area, you can find the remnants of abandoned Finnish and Karelian settlements. At the moment, all this is located in the Paanajärvi National Park, area 104371 hectares.

Appendix 2 - Blue and John Crow Mountain National Park and the Iwokrama National Park and International Centre

The Blue and John Crow Mountain National Park:

<http://www.blueandjohncrowmountains.org/>

The Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park (BJCMNP) is located in the eastern end of the island of Jamaica. It extends over a planimetric area of 495.2 km² and represents 4.5% of Jamaica's land surface.

When topography is taken into consideration, the area is 78,212 hectares (193,292 acres). The mountains of the Park dominate the skyline of eastern Jamaica, and incorporate much of the hinterland of the parishes of Portland, St. Thomas, St. Andrew and a small section of south-east St. Mary. The steep mountain slopes form the upper sections of ten (10) of the island's twenty-six (26) watershed management units. The highest point in the island - Blue Mountain Peak (2,256 meters) is located in the southern region of the Park. The BJCMNP is actually composed of three mountain ranges - the Port Royal, Blue, and John Crow Mountains, divided by the Buff Bay and Rio Grande Valleys on the north side of the ranges.

The BJCMNP contains the largest contiguous tract of closed broad-leaf forest in Jamaica, and its upper and lower montane rain-forests are recognized globally for their high biological diversity and threatened status. The core, Preservation Zone of the Park consists of closed primary forest with broadleaf trees and makes up 53.2% of the Park. 40% consists of modified forest, timber plantations and ruinate or degraded woodlands and these areas along with about 4% agricultural and residential make up the Preservation Zone Buffer and Recovery Zones. Outside these areas, a 1 km-wide band is considered the Buffer Zone, in which Park management works with the rural communities to promote environmentally sustainable livelihoods and sustained, appropriate management of the area's natural and cultural resources.

The forests of the BJCMNP are:-

- The last of two known habitats of the Giant Swallowtail Butterfly (*Papilio homerus*) - the largest butterfly in the Western Hemisphere
- Important habitat for many Jamaican birds, including all the endemic species such as the endangered Jamaican Blackbird (*Neospiza nigerrimus*) and winter habitat for many migratory birds
- A refuge for Jamaican wildlife including the Jamaican Boa (*Epicrates subflavus*) and the Jamaican Hutia (*Geocapromys brownii*)
- Home to numerous endemic orchids, bromeliads, fern and other plants (including many on the IUCN Red List)
- Essential for absorbing carbon dioxide and producing oxygen - cleansing the air and reducing global warming
- Necessary for conserving the highly erodible soil of the area - preventing soil erosion and landslides

- Vital for providing water - the Park supplies over 40% of the population of Jamaica with domestic water, in addition to water for agricultural, industrial and commercial usage
- A component of the socio-cultural traditions of the Maroons and rural Jamaican communities. These traditions include food, craft, language, music and dance, are all highlighted at Misty Bliss - an annual festival at Holywell - the Park's main recreation area.

The Iwokrama National Park/ International Centre: <http://www.iwokrama.org/about-us/>

Dedicated as a place for research “to develop, demonstrate, and make available to Guyana and the international community systems, methods and techniques for the sustainable management and utilisation of the multiple resources of the Tropical Forest and the conservation of biological diversity”, the Iwokrama rainforest is located in the geographical heart of Guyana. It comprises 371,000 hectares of forest (1.6% of Guyana’s landmass and 2% of Guyana forests).

The Iwokrama Centre was established in 1996 to manage the forest area, following signature the year before of an international agreement between the Guyana Government and the Commonwealth Secretariat. Enshrined in an Act of the Guyana Parliament, the agreement gave the Centre the mandate to “promote the conservation and the sustainable and equitable use of tropical rainforests in a manner that will lead to lasting ecological, economic and social benefits to the people of Guyana and to the world in general”. In short, the Centre has the task to test the proposition that conservation, environmental balance and sustainable economic activity are mutually reinforcing – that it is possible to use a forest without losing it.

The rainforest is equally divided (for experimental purposes) into a wilderness preserve and a sustainable utilisation area. There have been for the last 12 years intensive baseline studies of the forest and the development of models for sustainable forest management in close co-operation with the local communities. The first 5 years of the Centre’s closely supervised and scientifically based sustainable timber operation came to an end early in 2012 and the Centre is now exploring a second phase operation.

Supervised by the IIC’s CEO and his team under the strategic policy direction of the IIC’s International Board of Trustees, Iwokrama conducts:

- Up to date scientific research into the impacts of climate change on the forest;
- Ground breaking steps to measure and evaluate the contribution which Iwokrama’s natural services make to the forest’s overall financial value;
- Four core self-supporting businesses – selective timber harvesting, eco-tourism, forest management training and the forest’s services – putting into practice 12 years of intensive experience of conservation and sustainable forest management since the IIC’s foundation;
- Innovative governance models of business development which include private sector and local community participation through shareholding agreements;
- A unique form of devolved governance (enshrined in the Act of Parliament) placed in the hands of international trustees; and most important of all
- Close knit relationships with the local communities, based on equality and mutual trust, which help drive the co-management of Iwokrama and its multi-dimensional resources.

Commonwealth organizations, including the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth Forestry Association, continue to be important and much valued sponsors and

partners of Iwokrama. The Commonwealth Secretariat is currently assisting with laying the basis for a new programme relating to hydrology and the impacts of climate change on the forest, as well as the expansion and greater availability of the Centre's archives.